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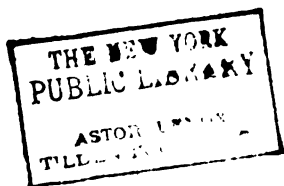
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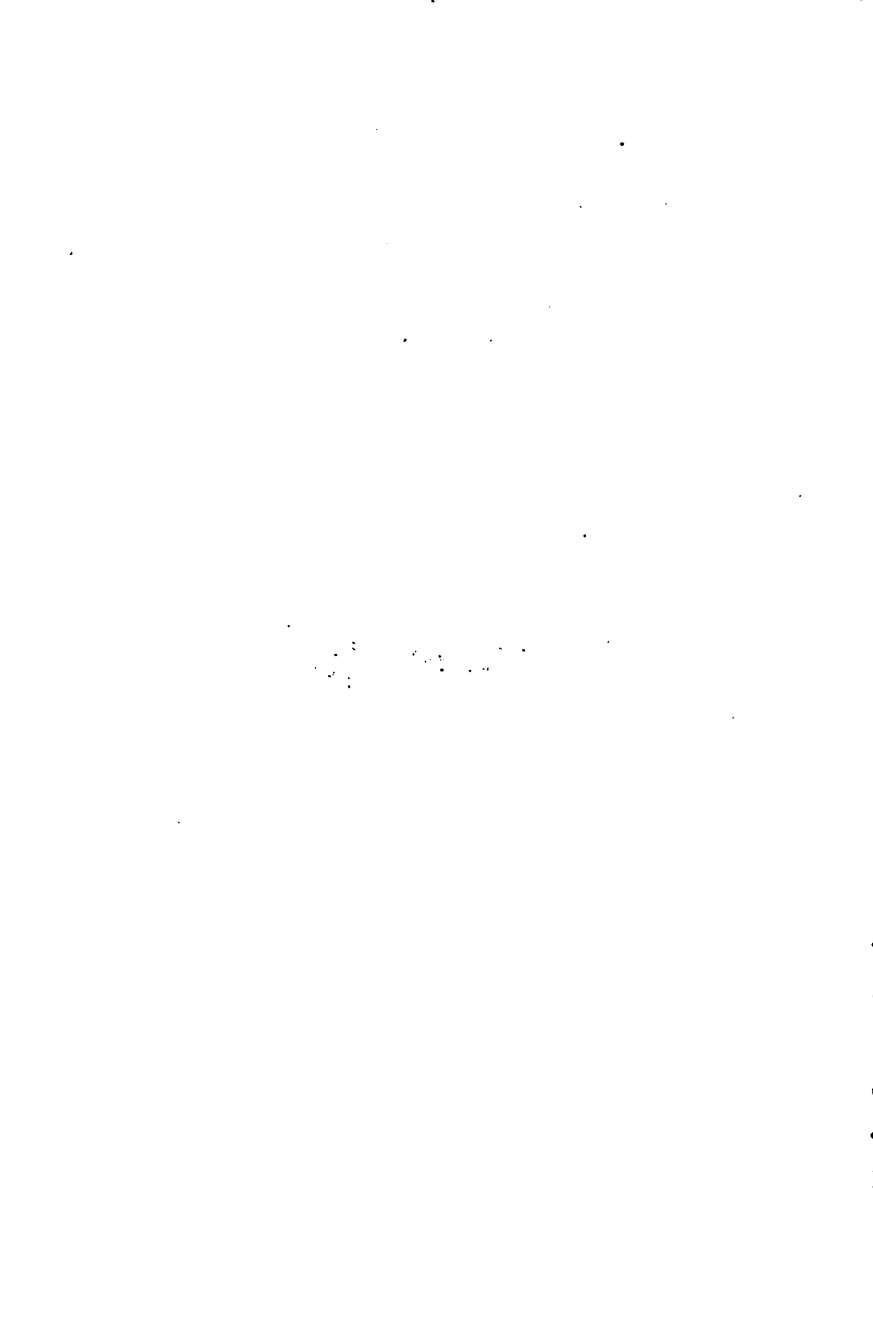


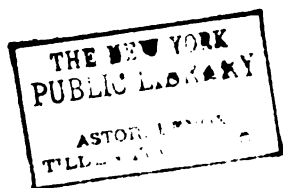
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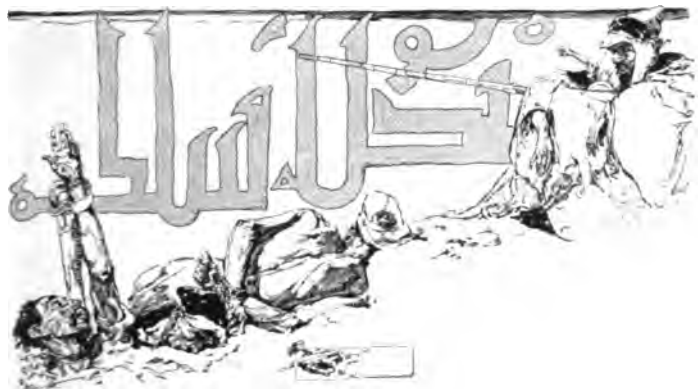












THE GARDEN OF FATE

BY ROY NORTON
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
JOSEPH CLEMENT COLL

NEW
YORK



W. J. WATT & COMPANY

1910



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THE GARDEN OF FATE

1927

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THE GARDEN OF FATE

CHAPTER ONE

THE Honorable Bob Marshall, United States consul to Morocco, walked restlessly up and down the length of the inner court of the consulate in Fez, his boot-heels clicking impatiently on the blue tiles. He stopped before a fountain in the wall, where a marble griffin's head sprayed a basin beneath, and, frowning at the wooden tracteries of the galleries above, let out a loud roar.

"I want to know if you girls are ever comin' down to breakfast?" he bellowed. Then, receiving no response, he called in a louder tone: "Charlie! Oh, Charlie!"

A Nubian housemaid, waiting beside a pillar, grinned broadly. The Arab porter, squatted at the door, swaddled in a white burnous and looking like a bronze image, lifted his eyes slowly, and again became absorbed in the blue tilings at his feet.

"Hey, up there!"

"Yes, father."

The consul looked up to where, half-revealed through the delicate open-work of the first balcony, his daughter was giving a finishing twist to the heavy coils of her

wavy blond hair, which caught stray beams of light from above. She took three or four half-running steps to an open section between two pilasters, and leaned, laughing, over the rail. The consul's eyes lost their frown, and his air of impatience became visibly less.

"What I want to know," he said, "is whether you and Margaret are ever goin' to be ready for breakfast. It don't help fried eggs none to let 'em stand for half a day!"

"Coming now, sir," another voice broke in, with an English intonation; and their guest, Miss Margaret Clarke, of London, appeared beside the American girl, waving a good-morning salute with her hand. The girls disappeared, and the Honorable Bob sauntered across the court, and made his way to one of the alcove-like rooms opening beneath an arch, where a table was laid, its whiteness accentuated by the dark stuccoed walls behind. It was quite evident that the westerner had not reformed his American habit of having a hearty breakfast, instead of the light rolls and coffee of the East, and it was evident also that he was a constant object of curiosity to the Nubian housemaid, who bowed deeply as he passed between the gaily painted pilasters. His air of gruffness was dissipated as his daughter entered and gave him a kiss of salutation, but he assumed a reproachful attitude the while he took his seat and addressed himself to Margaret Clarke, whose dark eyes met his with quizzical expectancy.

"I'd hoped, Margaret," he said, "that you'd be able to make Charlie a little more punctual; but there don't seem to be nothin' on earth that can make her

travel on time. I used to try, but she's gettin' too big to spank. When she was no higher than that —" he held a hand above the tile, indicating a very indefinite height — "she would lay rolled in her blankets till camp had been struck. I remember one cook of an outfit that kicked, and after that we used to let her sleep rolled up in the grub-wagon."

The English girl laughed heartily at the consul's aggrieved tone, and he began his breakfast, after showing some indecision as to whether or not he should break his newly formed habit, and tuck the serviette beneath his chin.

"What a dear old grumbler Jimmy was!" his daughter said, reminiscently. "How well I remember him!"

She turned to her friend, with a little laugh.

He was as white-headed as father is now. He wore a long, straggling mustache and a white beard, which he used to trim himself — sometimes in notches, when he was in a hurry. He would growl loud enough to be heard a mile away, would swear at, and tyrannize over, every cowboy, and lose his temper when they played pranks with him. He looked very threatening all the time, and yet, on nights when the cattle stampeded, and father rode with the others, and I sat up and whimpered, he used to take me in his arms, and sing me to sleep with the most lugubrious ditties that any one ever heard."

The girl's face saddened a trifle, and she resumed her breakfast in silence. Margaret Clarke looked at her friend as though wishing to hear more of a story that to her was one in such strange setting.

"What became of him?" she asked.

The consul looked up and caught her eye.

"Dead," he answered. "Got killed tryin' to separate two fellers, fightin' in Cheyenne. Funny part of it was, both were friends of Jimmy's, and, when they saw what they'd done, both put their guns away, and blubbered, each one's feelin' 'mighty sure that he'd been the one that had done it."

The English girl's eyes opened very wide, with an expression of revulsion.

"Horrible!" she said. "Horrible! What a terrible country! What terrible men!"

"No," the Westerner hastened to reply in defense, "it wasn't a terrible country, and they were right good men; only, things were different out there, even the killin's. They weren't as bad as they are here, where you find women lyin' in the streets dead, every week or so. Feller told me a story here a few days ago, about a man that was called up about neglectin' the Mueddin, and he said he had to put off prayin' until he'd cut his wife's throat."

Margaret Clarke gave a gasp.

"You certainly don't believe that to be true, do you?" she asked.

"Can't say as I do."

"But you investigated it?"

"No; too busy with my own troubles."

The consul's face drew into a frown, and he seemed preoccupied with his thoughts.

"Of course, it's not true." Charlotte arose to the defense of the country. "Everyone here seems to take a delight in adding all they can to father's vexations.

Only the other day, someone told him there was constant danger of an uprising among the hill tribes, and that the Sultan had deferred a visit to some place or another for fear of it."

"Yes, but they do have uprisings you know," Margaret responded. "My brother, I am quite sure, is in a mild state of anxiety half the time."

"Mr. Buhammei, with whom I became acquainted on my first visit to Paris, the man you met when we stopped on the way here, is from one of the oldest of Moorish families, and, when I asked him whether there was any danger, and whether it was safe for us to come here, he merely laughed at the idea of an uprising."

The English girl did not accept the evidence as being unqualified. For a moment, she appeared thoughtful, and then, her breakfast finished, reached over to a vase of flowers in the center of the table, and selected one, breaking the stem slowly, as if still in thought.

"I do not quite understand," she said doubtfully, "how his word could be authoritative. He has been in Paris ever since he was a boy—a very little boy, I believe. He dresses like a Parisian, he talks like a Parisian, and, indeed, appears a Parisian. What can he know of this—the country which he has not seen for years?"

"Men of his country visit him there, I know," asserted the consul's daughter, intent on championing her side of the argument. "I have seen some of them—tall, dark men, who look ill at ease in their European clothes. I'm sure he is well informed."

"You seem to give him much credence."

Charlotte laughed softly, but with rather a mischievous light in her blue eyes, and then faced her friend.

"Now, why do you say that? You know he always amused me when it came to his every-day actions. I thought him an absurd man with his theatrical pose, always trying to look like a king, forever courteous and grave and stiff. They say he must be very wealthy," she went on inconsequently, "because I've heard it whispered that he gambles very heavily at times."

"So do all of them," was Margaret's scornful response. "But, for some reason, I did not like him — mere prejudice, I fancy. I have no patience with a man who deserts his country."

"But he hasn't deserted it! He's coming back."

Margaret showed signs of surprise.

"Why, he didn't say so when we were in Paris!"

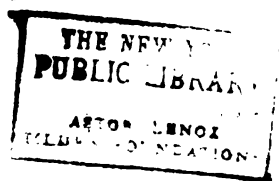
It was Charlotte's turn to pause. She appeared confused, and looked at her father, who, having drawn a slip of paper and a pencil from his pocket, was engaged in making notes for his own remembrance.

"No," she said slowly, "he didn't; but — but — you see, I have had a letter from him."

"Ah!" The English girl gave a gesture of understanding. "So, that is it! He has decided to return to his native land, since he learned that you were to be here for some time. His patriotism had grown since his country held the charming presence of the young lady to whom he tried to be devoted in Paris."

Charlotte gave a low laugh, tilting her head back until the dimple in the chin was prominent, the fine teeth





exposed, and the lines of the white throat rendered one long sweeping curve of grace.

"Madge," she remonstrated, "you are too clever. You don't think he is returning here because I came? You don't know any more than do I that he has any particular interest in me. He has never said anything. If he had — well, it would be different."

"Yes," Margaret assented, "it would be different. Ah, you Americans! I scarcely understand you sometimes — you people who speak our tongue, and who go merrily ahead without giving any serious thought to much of anything. Now, here is your Moor, properly introduced to you in Paris, who calls and is received, who is polished and uninteresting, who insists on being called 'Mister' or 'Monsieur,' who says he is a private gentleman only, who admits the years he has lived in Paris, and yet impresses me always with the fact that he is but a Moor varnished and garbed by Parisian civilization, cloaking his feelings always, and ever ready to show his blood in a way that we Anglo-Saxons call merely barbarous. That he wanted to meet you was natural. Who in Paris had not heard of the most beautiful American girl, sole heir to millions?"

The consul's daughter would have interrupted; but Margaret held up a hand in protest, and continued:

"I dare say you were amused with him; but, in your country, if he had taken the liberty of writing to you without permission you would have called it an affront."

The American girl's face became grave, and showed annoyance. The arguments were a trifle too near the

truth. She said nothing. Margaret Clarke, reading her thoughts, continued in a lighter tone:

“When is he coming?”

“He should be here in two or three days,” Charlotte answered; and then, after a pause, she arose to her own defense. “Madge, I don’t want you to think I gave him permission. That is what makes me certain he is well and constantly informed about his country. I have never written to him, nor given him permission to write; yet, he addressed me in care of this very house, and tells me he is returning and will be here within a few days after my receipt of the letter, and hopes to be remembered when he calls.”

Margaret’s face depicted no surprise, but only looked more thoughtful. This very gravity impressed her companion, and they arose from the table with a sense of something fateful impending that neither could define, an intangible nothing. The Honorable Bob, hearing the rustling of their morning gowns, looked up from his paper, folded it, thrust it into his pocket, and said:

“Hello! Through breakfast?”

He, too, arose, fumbled in his vest-pocket for a cigar, and paused to light it before following them to the courtyard where, arm-in-arm, they stood and watched the play of the central fountain, of which the reflections were thrown on the small purple squares of the tile at their feet.

“Do you see those twelve marble vases?” the consul asked, swinging his hand round toward the sides of the inner court. “Yes? Well, it shows you just how careless these people are. They never knew until yesterday,

when I had to have this big fountain in the middle patched up, that every one of the vases is a fountain."

The girls gave exclamations of delight, and looked about them.

"Here!" the consul called to the squatting figure that had never changed its position by the door. The porter slowly and with natural grace arose, and waited for the command.

"Turn on the lot of them!" was the order, issued in very bad Arabic; but the man seemed to understand, and disappeared.

From the twelve vases, which had been cleared of the plants they had formerly held, sprang twelve jets of water, leaping into the air in tiny, ragged streams that fell back in broken drops to the basins below. The girls were expressing their pleasure and surprise, when the porter from the outer door entered, with softly flowing garments, and approached the consul.

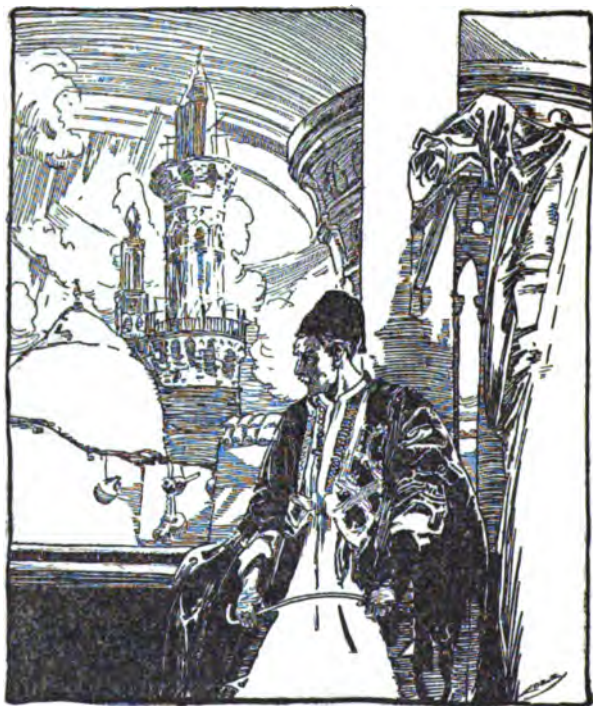
"El Kaid Clarke," he said, softly.

The consul nodded his head, and smiled. The Arab hurried away.

"Your brother is coming," he said to Margaret, "and I'm mighty glad to see him."

To the Honorable Bob, men were largely like open books, and from the day he had met the brother of Margaret Clarke in Tangiers, he had formed a liking for the strange English adventurer. The reticent, sun-tanned little man, clad in the uniform of a general of the Moroccan army, had impressed him. Stories of a brilliant career came to his ears after he arrived in Fez, stories endowing the quiet kaid with phenomenal prowess. To

step from a subaltern's position in a British Lancer regiment to the control of an army was a long stride; but the more he became acquainted with his guest's brother, the more readily he could see that this rise had been ac-



complished through masterful merit. In the long, tedious trip from Tangiers to Alkazar, over the wide plains of Ben-Auda, through the land of the Beni-Has-san with its thieving inhabitants, Sidi-Hassan, Zeguta and Sagat to Fez, where at the time the imperial pres-

ence was in repose, he had learned that Clarke was generally feared and respected. On the other hand, the fact that Bob Marshall was the first American consul in the country who dared to "get right up next to the throne" had called the kaid's respectful attention to him. Thus, their intimacy had begun.

The consul, followed by the two girls, led the way, to the door that gave on the outer garden, to greet the trusted general of the Sultan. Clarke came rapidly toward them, wearing his white turban, blue burnous, red drawers and yellow boots as gracefully as though he had known no other uniform throughout his military career. The only mark of the foreigner was the short crop he carried in his hand, with which he idly switched his leg. There was little in his face to suggest the fearless mastery of a throne and of an army.

"Good-morning. Late," he said, by way of salutation, and gave his sister a peck on the cheek, the consul a quick nod, and a hand-shake to the American girl, into whose eyes he looked with a rather steady scrutiny, which traveled to the crown of her head in a look of approval.

"How's everybody?" he asked, as he tossed his crop upon a marble bench near at hand. "I hear," he continued with a fleeting smile, addressing himself to the consul, "that you have been in trouble again — had one of your subjects in jail, got him out in some surreptitious manner. Odd diplomacy — deucedly odd, but successful! Eh? Successful — I hope!"

The lean, grim face of the consul flushed, from the point of his grim, resolute chin upward past the wrinkles

at the corners of his eyes and to the very roots of his close-cropped gray hair. He looked sharply from his giant's height squarely down into the Englishman's eyes.

"See here, general," he remarked, "this thing's no joke with me. It's the only official business I've had since I landed in this camp, and I've got to get His Majesty, the Sultan, Mr. Muley Mohammed, to agree to leave naturalized American citizens alone, or I'll go broke. When he throws 'em in jail, I bribe the jailers to let the poor devils go. The United States don't give me no funds to foot the bill. The United States don't back me up when I try to fight. This is the only public job I ever had, although the boys out in Wyoming did try to get me to go to Congress—a job I wouldn't take because a congressman ought to know a mighty lot that old Bob Marshall never had a chance to learn."

The kaid started to interrupt with some reply, but the consul held up a restraining hand. He glanced over his shoulder at the two girls.

"Come on," he said, addressing all, "let's go back into the garden," and he led the way. The others followed him through the inner court and out to the enclosure where the shrubbery was in bloom. The kaid walked by his host's side, and exchanged comments with his sister as they passed along the graveled paths. The consul and his friend looked round when the noise of the following steps ceased. The English girl, dark, stately and dignified, was looking at a rose, which the American girl, blonde, bright and smiling, had pulled forward on its stem for her inspection. The consul slipped his arm through that of his companion, and led the kaid

along the path to an arbored bench, upon which they seated themselves. The Honorable Bob pulled a fresh cigar from his pocket, lighted it, and, without looking at Clarke, who was imperturbably staring at the tips of his boots, said:

“You and me ain’t known each other very long. About three or four months, ain’t it? Well, I’ve got to tell you a lot of things, so you’ll see just where I stand. None of you folks over here seem to realize quite what all this means to me. A few minutes ago, I told you that ’twas the first public job I ever had, and that I wouldn’t go to Congress. When Charlie came out of Vassar College, and heard about that Congress business, she didn’t seem to like it much. I s’pose she’d got tired of being the daughter of old Bob Marshall, the cattle king — that’s what they call me out home. She was brought up with a feller named Whitney. He was a little maverick when I got hold of him, and it was me that sent him to West Point. He’s a captain now. Well, Charlie and Dick got their heads together, and, before I knew it, and without my asking for the job, the state department appointed me consul to this country of yours. The governor brung me the news, and I told him that I wasn’t lookin’ for any political thing. He said there was nothin’ to do over here, and Charlie was bound I should take it.”

The consul faced about on the bench, looked into the Englishman’s eyes, and said in a confidential tone:

“Say, do you know, I’ve never been farther away from home than the stockyards in Chicago, before I became consul to Morocco? The congressman from our

district got a silk hat and a long-tailed coat onto me."

The American chuckled, and slapped his knee.

"I wouldn't have the boys in Marshalltown, Wyoming, see me with that hat on for the best thousand dollars that Uncle Sam could make. Lord! they'd make it look like a sieve! Well, when I got down to New York, the newspaper boys got to printin' a lot of stuff I told 'em, and had a lot of fun with me. I don't know much about this diplomatic business, and the way I've done things all my life was to hand things out straight from the shoulder.

"The United States is a mighty big country to me. I've always thought it about the finest thing in the world to be an American citizen. There's a responsibility in bein' a foreign representative of America that I appreciate. They said that I was goin' to represent them—and don't you forget it, I'm goin' to, just as long as I hold the job. That's why I did somethin' that American consuls haven't done before—came right square into the heart of this country; so, if Americans weren't treated right, I could put it up to the Sultan in a way that he'd come pretty near knowin' what I'm at. I'm goin' to teach these fellers, before I'm through, that, when their people go over to the United States and take out citizenship papers and make a little stake and then come back here to pay a visit, they're not to be thrown in jail on any fool excuse until they've pungled up. I've got a half-dozen men out since I came, by payin' their fines, bribin' your jailers, or raisin' so much Hades they had to let 'em go. Now, it begins to look to me as if I'm the one that's bein'

worked for a sucker. They say you're the instructor-in-chief of this imperial army, that you're a little closer to the throne than any foreigner ever got, and that you've got a pull with this Sultan chap. How 'bout it? Can't you do something to help me out?"

In his earnestness, the Honorable Bob arose to his feet, and walked backward and forward in the arbor, stopping at last at its extreme end. The officer looked at the man steadily for a full minute, and then shook his head with a dubious air. He, too, arose and walked across to the consul, and stood looking up at the gigantic figure which, in its six-foot-three, towered above him.

"No," he said, "I can't. In all the years I've been here, I haven't been able to make these people, or His Majesty, the Sultan, understand that it is a form of petty extortion that should be stopped. I can get evasive answers — the same as you. I can go just as far, and then must stop, or incur a disapproval that bars every effort. Great Britain and America combined cannot protect their own in Morocco. They cannot — combined — overcome the rapacity of the country, which I serve as best I may."

The kaid threw his hands up with such an eloquent gesture of helplessness that the consul, despite his own irritation, pitied the officer, this soldier of fortune who had risen to high command, was respected, obeyed, and yet impotent.

For the first time in the months they had known each other, there was a sense of mutual helplessness between them which they could not overcome. The Englishman wore the air of one who was oppressed, and had allowed

the feeling to creep upward until it betrayed itself visibly, peeping here and there from beneath the cloak of his habitual reserve and phlegm. The American, looking at the other shrewdly, surmised that the officer, who had risen so high and had accomplished so much, had an under-burden of care.

"See here, Hamilton," he said, addressing the kaid for the first time by the given name, and resting a hand on the soldier's shoulder, "I won't bother you with my affairs. I reckon there's somethin' worryin' you. I like you. You're on the square, all right. I've found that out, so I don't blame you for not bein' able to help me through with somethin' I've set my head on, and —" the consul banged one closed fist into the receptive palm of the other hand — "somethin' I'm goin' to make good on before I stop!"

The officer looked at the consul, wondering what had caused this outburst of impatience in one usually so self-contained. This gray-eyed giant, old enough to be his father, was a perpetual study to him, and, too, despite the brusqueness of manner, was a constant cause of admiration. Now, for the first time, Hamilton Clarke felt that he had been invited by this strong, elemental man to give confidence for confidence, and his reserve was slowly and unexpectedly melting away. He felt himself a youth beside this man who was so wise and fearless, yet so out of place in the position into which he had been thrust. Notwithstanding, it was difficult for the kaid to talk.

"I came here a good many years ago," he said at last, looking at his feet and absently tugging his short-

cropped mustache as the two halted before a great clump of aloes; "came because this service promised much. It wasn't easy at first, and I had to fight my way up through all sorts of intrigue, without any support and with no friends. I got where I am, and thought to see some reward, and to step out and go back — back there to the Berkeley hills where I was born. But, now, all of a sudden, I find that I must still fight, that the end hasn't come yet, and that I can't go until my work is better done. Do you know, Mr. Marshall," he said, pausing and frowning at the figure of an Arab gardener who was twining a fallen vine against the outer wall, "that there is danger of an insurrection here within the next few weeks, that I can't get details, and that the Sultan is alarmed to such an extent he dares not leave his palace until reassured?"

The American turned abruptly toward the kaid, whose face he studied for a moment before answering. He gave a glance back to where the two girls were standing, and then a sudden fear overspread his eyes.

"And them?" he asked, motioning toward Charlotte and Margaret.

"Are safe, I believe. Otherwise, I should advise that they both leave at once, and you with them."

"My boy," the Honorable Bob replied, "you don't need to worry about me. I'm used to times and countries where a man lives by his own quickness. I know you wouldn't have told me this if you hadn't been worried, and I thank you for sayin' what you have. I ain't askin' no favors, because I know, when it comes to a show-down, you'll say, 'It's time for 'em to go now,'

But I do want to say this: that, if I can help you out, I'm ready — because I like your nerve, and I've liked your sister ever since she met us in London, and wanted me to chaperon her down here to meet you. I'm no spring chicken when it comes to givin' advice. And I want you to give me the inside tip when this insurrection business is to be pulled off, or when you find out what it is. What do you know now?"

The officer faced about toward his sister and her hostess.

"I can't tell," he said, "but fancy it's the same old story — another prophet who wants the throne and turban of His Majesty, Muley Mohammed, and who will bring down hill tribes to be slaughtered in a three week's campaign, and to be driven back to their red ravines until another pretender calls a *jehad*."

CHAPTER TWO

IT was but a few days later when, returning from a visit to the house of the minister of foreign affairs, the consul, after being admitted through the high wall of the outer court by the porter, learned that he was alone in the consulate. His daughter and his guest, Margaret Clarke, accompanied by the kaid, had gone to the bazaars.

He gave a long sigh of discontent, and stretched himself on a wicker couch, whence he could look out on the inner court. Its white pilasters, ornamented in Moorish style and supporting arches in horseshoe shape, from each of which hung a huge iron lantern, its galleries hedged off by delicate wooden trceries, its shadowy recesses, its sparkling fountains, its enameled mosaics and arabesques, had all delighted him when he first came to this ancient capital; but, now, their charms were lost and belittled by the knowledge that he was in an official position in a land of infinite squalor and cunning, variegated by infinite show and pretense.

Here, it was far different in its intrigue and treachery from the honest and open life he had led in that distant American West. There, he had had but little to bother him, even his business being largely delegated to lawyers. Although the principal owner in hundreds of herds and in a dozen banks, he had never accepted a directorship in any company, preferring to lead a

life untrammelled by an appointment. His shrewd foresight had predirected his affairs. Prior to his acceptance of this office, he had had no immediate plans for the future. His income had been automatic; he had had no ambitions to serve; the very future of his daughter had been fixed and assured. When Dick Whitney started for West Point, with that same shrewd forehandedness Bob Marshall had brought about a betrothal between the boy and the girl, who had been reared as brother and sister, and who regarded each other with quiet fondness. The engagement had been an established understanding in the family for so many years that the Honorable Bob never thought it necessary to mention it. Charlotte, on her part, found it merely a convenience for getting rid of too persistent suitors, but young Dick Whitney, now an officer, looked upon it with more eagerness.

So accustomed was the Honorable Bob to having all his wishes accepted by ultimatum that he was distressed in this foreign environment over the repeated failures to carry out his projects.

"Tryin' to get anythin' out of the Sultan of this damn savage country," he said to himself, as he turned over on his wicker couch, "is just about as hopeful a job as a missionary had tryin' to educate a Piute Indian to use soap. If ever I get out of this —"

The Arab porter had appeared in the archway, and, with one hand held across his breast, was deeply bowing to attract the consul's attention.

"American man," he said. "He say have no card."

"American, eh? Wonder how you guessed that?"

The consul threw his long legs off the couch, reached for the long-tailed coat, which he wore as an official mark of office, and, as he thrust his hands through the sleeves, said to the waiting porter:

"Well, show him in. There ain't no American ever gets turned down so long as I'm here." Then, as the porter bowed and moved away: "Wonder how much this fellow will want to borrow?"

He started toward the court just as the door opened, but stopped short in amazement.

"Good Lord!" he shouted. "Why, Dick, is that you?" He rushed forward to greet his foster son, threw his arms around the officer, and gave a hug such as a bear, playful and affectionate, might bestow upon a cub. "What in the devil brings you here? Lord! But I'm glad to see you, boy! Why, it's like a sniff of home. Come on, and tell me all about it. Hold on! Wait till I get a look at you! Stand off there, and turn round a couple of times!"

The officer, laughing, disengaged his hands, and did as ordered, standing at attention while his brown eyes filled with an affectionate warmth, and a smile broke from the corners of his smooth-shaven lips. He jerked down the tails of his buttoned sack-coat, as if it were a uniform. He had the well-set figure of the West-Point man who has not allowed himself to rust for want of active work, and was distinctly well poised and soldierly looking. His cleanly-lined mouth and jaw suggested a steady determination that, on occasion, would prove no less uncompromising than that of the Honorable Bob himself. The latter, apparently,

found the young man good to look upon, for at the end of his scrutiny he put both hands on the captain's soldiers for an instant, then, wheeling, slid one hand under an arm, led the way to the apartment he had just left, shoved his guest into a chair, threw himself back on the couch, and said:

"Just light in, and tell me what it's about. Hope you haven't been fired. Hope it was because you wanted to see our girl, and not me."

In the glare of the light from the match with which he was lighting a cigar, the consul failed to note that there was little enthusiasm on the face of his protégé.

"It's easy to tell," the captain said, "how I come to be here. Got a year's detached duty, to study foreign cavalry methods. Had intended to go first to Germany, but heard there were rumors of an uprising in Morocco — good deal of unrest. Thought I'd better begin by studying and reporting on how the Moors ride around Tangiers. Got there, and found the Honorable Robert Marshall had upset another established rule by removing his seat of office up next to that of His Majesty, the Sultan — at present in Fez."

"So, came on, eh?" the consul interjected.

"Yes, so I came on. Had rather a hard time of it, until by accident I found the magic word that gained me all sorts of courtesies from sheiks, douars and saints. Some of the roving, dark-skinned gentlemen circulated the mysterious report that I had been sent for by one General Hamilton Clarke, who seems to have pretty effectually taught them to leave his friends alone, so I didn't deny it, and came through easily. That fellow

must be all right; they say he's sort of instructor-general here. Englishman, too, I believe, of the sort that go anywhere and usually make good."

The Honorable Bob leaned back, and laughed.

"So, you think he's all right, eh? Well, if you've got any doubts about that, I'll tell you, he is. His sister lives here with us. She's one of the family, now. Charlie and I couldn't get along without her. We brought her down here to see her brother, and he comes here every night of his life, unless he's off in the interior somewhere, tryin' to beat some sense into those confounded Indians that he calls an army. You'll like him, all right. He's afraid to talk about half the time; but, when you get down to bed-rock with him, you'll learn every day that there was a little more man in him than you thought there was the day before. In one way, his sister's a good deal like him, mighty sparing in words. But, hang it all, Dick, this isn't us! How long are you going to stay with us?"

"Indefinitely," Whitney answered. "I think I can stand this palace, if you and Charlie can. But how do you like your new nation?"

His foster father launched into an emphatic tirade against the Moorish government. From outside came the mingled sounds of splashing waters, of the subdued conversation in the servants' quarters, mellowed by intervening walls, and of the continuous cries from donkey boys, who urged their beasts through the narrow, twisting streets. The American officer sat looking curiously at the man who had been thrust into foreign office, and who appeared out of place in this setting, so

far removed from the wide hills and free ranges to which he had been accustomed all his life. As the officer watched the Honorable Bob, his face softened with a glow of affection. With his own limited knowledge of diplomatic life, its multitudinous details of policy and its constant necessities for probing beneath the surface of all things, he could appreciate the consul's thorny path. He wondered if Bob Marshall would achieve success in this enterprise such as he had gained in all other endeavors of his tempestuous and stormy life.

The consul was still in the midst of his tirade, when they were interrupted by laughing voices outside.

"There they come!" the Honorable Bob shouted, checking himself abruptly and jumping to his feet. He attempted to hold the captain behind him, calling as he did so: "Hey, Charlie! Hold on a minute! Guess who's here?"

The kaid was not with the girls, and they were turning to the opposite side of the court, when the consul's shout checked them. The English girl, as if believing herself an intruder, disappeared into an archway, while Charlotte started toward her father. He stepped aside, put his hand behind the captain's back, and shoved the young man forward.

"Here's Dick! Our old Dick!" he called enthusiastically, and the officer and his betrothed hurried to an affectionate embrace. With an arm round Charlotte's waist, more as a brother than as a lover, Dick directed her steps toward the little reception-room from which he had just emerged. They seated themselves side by side on the couch, while the Honorable Bob glowered down

upon them like a fond ogre. They had talked for some minutes before the consul realized that their guest was not with them. He strode out into the court, and called loudly:

"Margaret! Oh, Margaret! Where are you? Why don't you come down here? We want you to meet our boy! Dick's here! You'd better get a hustle, and get acquainted with him! He's goin' to live here with us."

The English girl, with a half-smile, appeared in the court, and the Honorable Bob, with more enthusiasm than she had ever known him to display, caught her by the arm and hurried her to an introduction. Dick Whitney arose to meet her. She looked up at him with frank, interested eyes, and he, after uttering a commonplace, resumed his seat. Neither felt restraint, each accepting the other as a member of the household, and Charlotte, after a few introductory remarks, in which she said, "Dick is just like a dear big brother to me," put out her hand, and, with caressing fingers, touched the soldier's temple.

"Why, old fellow," she suddenly exclaimed, "there's a gray hair there, and you are not yet thirty years old." For a moment, they appeared to disregard Margaret Clarke. Placid and smiling he looked at her face.

"Long hours of study beneath the dim light of electric bulbs, in cabins built of stone in the backwoods district of the war department at Washington," he said, with a sepulchral air. "Weren't any rails to split, or I'd have tried them, too," he added, to complete his review of the lives of great men.

He glanced across at Margaret, who was calmly studying him with frank curiosity. He had a sharp sense of deep knowledge in her look, and, for some reason that he could not have defined, sustained embarrassment as though he were in a false position.

"I understand," he said, addressing her, and without any movement of caress toward his fiancée other than softly patting her hand, "that your brother is Kaid Clarke."

"Yes," she replied, simply. There followed a pause of waiting.

"I have been much interested in him," Dick Whitney said, presently. "He has influence in Morocco, and I have traveled under a false cloak of protection, through inadvertent use of his name."

Margaret's eyes opened a trifle wider, but she made no comment.

"They thought I was coming to meet him," the American added.

"That sophistry can be remedied very quickly, indeed," the girl said. "It was hardly a subterfuge, after all, because, in a certain sense, you were coming to meet him. He will be here soon; he comes every evening for dinner, so you shall know him in truth."

The Honorable Bob, whose eyes had never wandered from his foster son's face, again started to express his approval of the kaid, but was once more interrupted by the Arab porter, who announced another visitor.

"Guess you folks will have to get along without me for awhile," he said. "This certainly does seem to be my busy day."

He passed out into the court, and they had barely resumed conversation when they heard his voice outside, and surmised that he was returning with the visitor.

"Your Paris friend," he said to the young ladies, and, with a wave of his hand ushered in Mr. Buhammei. Both Charlotte and Margaret arose, and extended their hands. The officer, too, stood up, and found himself being introduced to an immaculately groomed man with a striking Moorish face. The eyes were dark and penetrating, the aquiline nose was almost that of a conqueror, the beard was intensely black and carefully trimmed; when he spoke, the even teeth showed of singular whiteness. He was rather above middle height, his figure was slender and wiry, and he held himself with a marked dignity. He did not extend his hand to Dick Whitney, but, instead, bowed deeply in acknowledgment of the introduction.

The newcomer seated himself, and, in flawless English, gave some of the details of his trip, the Honorable Bob now and then asking a question, as if striving to be polite. After a few minutes, the Moor rose to his feet, saying that he must excuse himself, as he had other appointments. The consul, still endeavoring to show friendliness toward a guest, started to escort the visitor to the door.

"Hold on a minute!" he said. "Mr. Buhammei, you'd better come and have dinner with us this evening."

As the Moor accepted this invitation, Dick looked across the room at Margaret, and saw her give an involuntary gesture of annoyance. When the sound of

the visitor's footsteps had died away, and the consul turned, Charlotte took him to task.

"Now, what on earth did you do that for?" she said, shaking her finger under her father's nose.

"Why, I thought you wanted me to," he replied, with a look of surprise. "Friend of you girls, isn't he?"

"Yes, but — oh, well, I think it would have been nicer to have had no one outside our own family with us, to-night."

The Honorable Bob, after admitting that he "hadn't thought" of that, busied himself with some American magazines, and Charlotte, as mistress of the house, disappeared in the direction of the dining-room. For the first time, the officer felt himself alone with the English girl, whom he had been thoughtfully watching, as if studying something vague and half-forgotten.

"Miss Clarke," he said, "I have been trying to recall whom you remind me of. I think I have it. Once, several years ago, I had the pleasure of going on a hunting trip with a countryman of yours, Lord West. You bear him a distinct resemblance."

She looked amused, but made no response other than an interrogative, "Yes?"

"We all liked him very thoroughly," the American continued, "for there was nothing of assumption about him, and he proved himself to be a splendid sportsman. I was detailed to accompany him on a big-game trip, and, with none but Indians for companions, we passed several wonderful weeks together."

Margaret Clarke was now smiling at him with a new interest in her eye.

"I am glad you liked him," she said. "I am rather fond of him myself. He is my elder brother, and I have often heard him speak of those weeks, and of you."

Feeling that some of her reserve had vanished, Whitney impulsively walked across the room, and sat down beside her. He wondered if it were possible that beneath her outward calmness there glowed any spontaneity. Her very air of indifference had interested him, and he felt a keen desire to arouse in her some spark of enthusiasm.

"Doesn't it seem strange," he said, "that we should meet here; in this far off place, to learn that we have a sort of mutual tie — yours of relationship, and mine of friendship?"

She looked at him gravely, but with no indication that the peculiarity of their acquaintanceship was of any exceptional interest.

"Aren't you surprised?" he asked.

"No, I can't say that I am!"

Captain Whitney experienced a sense of rebuff, and wondered whether he were personally objectionable to the strange and incomprehensible English girl at his side. Half-baffled and finding it difficult to converse with her, he took refuge in opening a conversation with the consul. Margaret took no part in it, although looking from one man to the other as if mildly interested. The Honorable Bob was off on his hobby again, and, before long, was stalking up and down the room with his hands thrust deep in his pockets, detailing the various difficulties he had met from the Moorish authorities. Again, the captain found himself study-

ing the English girl. He wondered whether she could ever show signs of elation, of anxiety, or of love. She turned her eyes to his, and inadvertently his thought materialized into a probing look, as if he were searching for something deep in the seclusion of her mind. He was rude. Suddenly, as if reading his interrogation, her eyes sought another object, while her brows drew down for an instant, as though she were annoyed. In her very faltering, he sustained an elation, as if he had been on a dueling field and had asserted his superiority.

The deepened shadows warned them of the approaching dinner hour. The consul called attention to this, pulled a huge silver watch from his trousers-pocket, and consulted it.

"Guess it's most time to eat again," he remarked, sententiously. "Nearly half-past seven. Hamilton'll be here pretty soon."

All stood up. The Honorable Bob put a hand on the captain's shoulder.

"Dick," he said, "come on, and I'll show you where you bunk — right next to me, upstairs."

With a bow to the girl, the young man followed his host out into the court, and up a flight of stairs to a gallery, then past thin screens protecting the doorways to another and commodious wing of the spreading house, where, as best he might before the coming of his baggage, he prepared himself for the evening meal. He was still intent on the thought of the baffling Miss Clarke, when he heard the sounds of laughter below, and leaned over the gallery above the court, to discover the girls talking with a man whom he surmised to be

Kaid Clarke. The general was in the uniform of the Moorish staff, and was barely discernible as a splotch of color on the pavement below. A noiseless, white-clad figure bearing a taper passed close behind the dim group, and lighted, one after another, the iron lanterns suspended from the lower arches. The dull yellow gleams increased until they lent languid reflections to the waters of the fountains, the wet leaves of the palm trees in the court and the little purple squares of glistening tiles. It appeared to the American, as he leaned over the balcony, that the kaid devoted most of his attention to the girl from the distant west, who was laughing up in his face with a rippling note that was attuned to the falling of the waters, while the English girl stood alone. He recognized the darker and quieter figure as hers, where she stood apart, with her hands clasped together, looking into the depths of the fountain's basin, motionless as a figure of fate.

CHAPTER THREE

THE American officer was not quite certain what judgment to form of the kaid, when they met at the dinner-hour. If he had expected to see anything indicating the soldier of fortune, he was disappointed; for there was nothing of the adventurer in Clarke, who was impassive, unimpressive, a poor talker and entirely without magnetism. They stood by the fountain, waiting for the consul to appear, the burden of the conversation being carried by Charlotte, who detailed amusing experiences of the day with a dashing comment, laughing unaffectedly and enjoying herself heartily. The American again found himself watching the English girl, but her face was placid as usual, and only now and then was there any change that suggested amusement. Her brother, however, laughed in a slow, repressed way. Gradually, they began to feel less reserve, and they were on a friendly footing at least when the Moor appeared, clothed in the regulation evening dress, having followed the Arab servant without waiting for announcement of his arrival.

The American could not fail to observe the similarity of the two men as they advanced, despite the difference in their dress. The noiseless servant, whose white linen fell into graceful folds as he moved forward with a stealthy, easy step, with his dark, dignified and half-barbarous face, suggested the desert no more

than did the carefully groomed man behind him, who had the same free stride, the same gentle swing of the shoulders and the same imperturbable pose. Buhammei came into the group, bowed deeply, and kissed the back of the American girl's hand with a slight touch. He paid similar deference to Margaret Clarke, acknowledged his previous introduction to the American officer with the polite remark that they had met before, and then shook hands with the Englishman.

"You are Kaid Hamilton Clarke," he said, as though making an assertion of fact rather than asking a question; and his eyes deliberately traveled from the officer's eyes to his feet, taking in every detail of appearance.

"Yes," responded the kaid, staring unwinkingly at the Moor, and standing as motionless as a lay figure.

There was nothing in word or action of either to instigate the thought, but the American who watched them was certain that each had taken a dislike to the other, and was measuring his man for future remembrance.

"The Sultan," Buhammei said, in a smooth, perfect intonation, devoid of accent, "apparently admires European army methods, or he would not have placed a British officer over the heads of his own people."

He had said nothing derogatory, yet the American could have sworn the words and voice carried a sneering comment. He looked at Clarke, expecting the officer to retort in kind, but the kaid was as unmoved as before, and his eyes remained just as they had been, cold and scrutinizing. The American marveled at the kaid's self-control.

"His Majesty, the Sultan," Clarke replied, with a decided emphasis on the title of respect, "is perhaps more progressive 'than others of his own people."

Buhammei's fingers twitched suddenly, and he stood a trifle more erect; but, before he could make any reply, the Honorable Bob, attired in a dinner-suit, which fitted his heroic figure perfectly, but in which he seemed ill at ease, joined the party, and held out his hand to the Moor.

"Good-evening, Mr. Buhammei," he said, looking down at his guest. "They say you were born here. Well, if that's so, I want to go on record as saying you're the only prompt man of your race I've ever met."

He disarmed the speech by a laugh, and turned to his daughter.

"Charlie," he drawled, "did you say a feller wore pearl studs or gold ones with one of these short-tailed full-dress coats? That's one thing I can't seem to recollect, and this is about the fourteenth hundred time I've had this here suit of clothes on."

He stopped a moment, and peered across the courtyard, to one of the arches that was more broadly lighted than the surrounding ones, where could be seen a table and two motionless servants standing at the sides of the entrance as if in waiting.

"Looks to me as if everything's ready, folks," he said, and then, as though to make amends for inhospitable thoughts, he turned to the Moor.

"Come on, Mr. Buhammei," he said. "We'll let the others follow along as they please."

The Moor walked beside him, after bestowing quick glances at Charlotte, who was talking familiarly to the kaid, and at the captain, who stood beside the English girl, saying nothing. Once seated at the table, Buhammei seemed more at ease, and gave himself to the task of entertaining. He proved to be an exceptionally good talker and widely informed, touching lightly on a dozen subjects, and bringing out those points that would be the most interesting to the others. But never by any chance did he address the kaid, who, between courses, watched and listened attentively to what the Moor said. That Buhammei followed the Moslem faith was evident, for not once did he taste wine. He had one peculiar gesture which his hearers noticed from time to time, a gesture so odd that it could scarcely be overlooked. When talking freely, he would gesticulate with his right hand, the middle two fingers of which remained closed down toward the palm while the others were extended at length. The American, who sat opposite him at the table, discovered later, while the hand was in repose, that those two fingers had suffered a wound of some character, which had stiffened the larger knuckles until the hand could no longer be completely opened. He saw, too, that the kaid noted the scar.

The consul lead the conversation into the subject nearest his own mind, the political aspect of Morocco. before he realized it, Buhammei was discoursing quite freely of the laws and conditions of his own country. He had just asserted that the Sultan could, in case a *jehad* should be proclaimed, command a little less than two hundred thousand men capable of bearing arms,

when he happened to glance up and meet the eyes of the kaid, who had suddenly rested his hands on the edge of the table, and was staring at the speaker fixedly.

For the first time, the Moor's eyes fell, and he showed signs of embarrassment and confusion. Clarke's gaze did not shift, but remained as direct and blank as it could possibly have been. Nevertheless, from that moment, the Moor became reticent, and refused to be led into any discussion touching Moroccan affairs.

The kaid's eyes slowly dropped, and he went on with his dinner, as speechless as before; but the American officer, who had been quietly observant, detected the change, and was certain that something had caused the visitor to curb his thoughts. He smiled across at Charlotte, who was seated at the end of the table, and she quite frankly answered. He glanced at the English girl, who was seated on the opposite side, but her face was as calm and inscrutable as ever. Again, he fell to wondering if she were indeed quick in perception, although the intelligence of her eyes declared her to be.

The Honorable Bob had been drawn into a reference to his early youth, and was earnestly describing the merits of a pony he had once ridden, before Margaret Clarke took any part whatever in the conversation. Then, as if anxious to talk, she passed pertinent comments, which displayed thorough knowledge of horsemanship, and surprised the officer of American cavalry, who had ridden all his life. He felt that he had gained a ground for conversation, and, for some reason that he could not have explained to himself, he was pleased.

"Charlotte can tell us something of horses, if you

can get her started," he ventured. "She was the best rider I ever knew."

The Moor again gave a quick glance toward his host's daughter, and Whitney decided that the look of approbation for the American girl was a trifle covetous. Charlotte laughed, but declined to be drawn into the foreground, and, a moment later, gave the signal for arising from the table. In a group of which the consul was the center, they walked in to the inner court where they seated themselves. Their host, elated over the discovery of twelve fountains in his courtyard, called their attention to these, then hailed the Arab porter at the door. Whitney, watching the fellow's approach and fascinated by the man's grace, thought how in keeping with the old palace this servant was. Dick was sitting in the shadow at the end of the bench, where his own face was in darkness, but the Arab advancing was in the full play of light from a lantern near at hand. Whitney was not quite certain, but it seemed to him that, as the servant halted, he gave a significant glance at Buhammei, which the latter caught.

The consul told the man to set the newly discovered sprays to playing, and the Arab turned away. Buhammei arose as though tired of inaction, and stood erect before his host.

"I am interested in the old fountains," he said carelessly, "and, if you have no objections, should like to accompany your man to see how they are constructed."

"Why, certainly, certainly!" the consul assented. "Not much to see, but a lot of old pipes. But you're welcome. Here, I'll go with you."

Dick found himself leaning forward and watching the Moor's face. He could give no reason for suspicion, yet, he had an intuition that the visitor wished to talk to the servant. That his surmise might have been well founded was proven by the fact that the servant, who had halted, half-smiled at Buhammei, and the latter interjected.

"Oh, no. Please do not trouble to come."

At that moment, the consul's daughter called her father, and he permitted his visitor to start toward the door immediately behind the Arab. Buhammei did not, however, follow the Arab out of the court, but halted and returned to the party, drawing out his watch as he did so, and looking at the time indicated.

"I think," he said slowly, "that I shall have to defer watching your fountains until some other time. I have suddenly remembered a business appointment that I had forgotten."

They all arose to their feet, and stood facing him.

"I wonder," he said, speaking to Charlotte, "if you and Miss Clarke would not enjoy a visit with me, tomorrow, to the top of Mount Zalag?"

The American girl impulsively answered for both.

"Very much, indeed," she said. "I've tried several times to get father to go up there with me, but he always objects. Says he climbed too many mountains in his youth to do any further scaling for pleasure. You'll go, won't you, Margaret?"

The English girl assented, before any one could offer an objection, had he been so inclined, but the captain, his suspicions aroused, interposed.

"I should like to make that trip, too," he said, quietly. "Mayn't I accompany you?"

He did not notice the quick movement of approval that the kaid involuntarily gave, but directed his question at Buhammei. The latter evinced no dislike; on the contrary, he hastened to assert that he was on the verge of asking the petitioner to join the party. His manner was so cordial that the American felt for an instant that he had done an injustice, and had been unduly suspicious. Nevertheless, he was glad to have been made a member of the expedition without further discussion. He was, for the moment, disarmed by the apparent candor of the Moor, whose dark eyes met his with a look that was at least friendly if not cordial.

Buhammei bade one after another good-night, punctiliously shaking hands with all save the kaid, to whom he bowed. Last of all to receive his adieu was Charlotte, and again it seemed to the American that the Moor held her hand an unnecessarily long time; but she, laughing and jesting with a girlish enjoyment of the evening, did not notice it. The consul accompanied his guest to the outer door, and sauntered slowly back.

"Well," he remarked cheerily, "I'm glad to feel at home again and with none but our own little family here. Somehow or another, most of these foreigners get on my nerves until I'm kind of sore on everything round me. I like to be with people where I don't have to be on my dignity, where I can say whatever crops into my head, and know that I ain't been misunderstood. I like men that show their thoughts in their faces. You're

sure of that kind, and know, somehow, that they ain't got a handful of cards up their sleeves."

He gaily shoved his arms through those of the two girls, and for the first time that evening the American officer saw the English girl unbend. She looked up into the consul's face, her lips parted in a smile that disclosed a tiny dimple in the side of her chin, and she laughed freely at some whispered addition to his speech. She gathered her black skirt into her hand with a gesture that was superbly graceful and natural, and cried:

"Ready everybody?"

The consul's daughter looked back at the officers.

"You two soldier men," she called, "can entertain each other. We're going for a walk in the garden."

The two officers watched the others go half-skipping across the inner court and cut through the doorway in whose black framework, set like jewels, appeared the stars of the sky. Neither said anything, but, as if by common impulse, they faced each other. For the first time since they had met, they were alone and left to their own resources. There was an instant's reserve as they stood beneath the lanterns clustered round the central fountain. Without knowing why, they warmed to each other in that strange prescience which aids some men to know when first they meet that they are to become friends.

"I'm glad you did that," the kaid asserted, as if they had been discussing some action.

The American looked a question.

"You — ah — you know, I think," his companion said. His tongue was slow.

The other still looked at him.

"I have no definite reason for thinking that man Buhammei a bounder of some sort," the Englishman went on, "but I feel safer when my sister and Miss Marshall are with you."

The American caught the full force of the compliment, and liked the kaid for his outright frankness.

"I thank you," he said; and his tone conveyed more than his words.

The kaid smiled, but looked awkward and at a loss for further words.

"Have another cigar," he blurted out, with a sudden rush of abandon, like a man who has striven over a problem for some time and has at last found the solution. "They are very good, you know."

He extended his cigar-case, and watched the American as the light of a match drove a centralized glow over the smooth face and blinking eyes. He looked round the court, and then back at the American, who was now puffing vigorously and watching him.

"Ah — nice place this," he said at last, becoming a trifle more abashed at his own persistent inanity of speech."

"See here, general," the American said abruptly, facing the kaid, and plunging the fingers of one hand into his vest-pocket. "What is the use of you and me being formal? I know what you are thinking of, and you know what I think. We understand each other on one thing, at least; and that is, we're both asking questions to ourselves about this man Buhammei. Isn't that so?"

The kaid looked up, and for the first time indulged in an open laugh.

"You have it," he said, relieved.

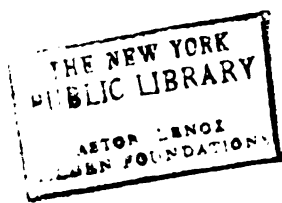
"Well, suppose we say what we think," the captain replied, and he looked round as though seeking some one. At the door of the inner court, a stolid figure stood quietly and, as the American glanced in this direction, dropped a pair of astute eyes to the tile. The officer's eyebrows came together in a sudden frown. He turned carelessly to the Englishman, and said:

"Isn't it better for us to join the others in the garden?"

The kaid looked at him in surprise, but assented by turning in that direction, his face still expressionless. They walked slowly toward the door and past the Arab, who continued to stare blankly at his feet, a picture of ignorance and innocence. They stepped outside into the starlit night, and the American led the way in the opposite direction from that in which the laughing voices of the two girls could be heard, and toward the end of the garden, the glow from his cigar coming fitfully in the darkness. Their heels crunched in unison over the graveled walks, and they said nothing until they came to an open spot where a round bench sat like a white stone oasis in the midst of the luxuriant verdure. They seated themselves here, and the cigar-light was suddenly thrown outward like an arc of fire, to fall in a tiny shower of sparks several yards distant.

"I'm going to tell you what I have noticed," the captain said with decision, abruptly facing the general. "I've observed much. That man Buhammei doesn't





like you for some reason that I know nothing of. He claims to have lived in Paris all his life, and yet is surprisingly familiar with the most private affairs of his country, being able even to estimate its army strength. He receives more deference from the Arab servants than you or I could gain in a lifetime. He is cold, polished and flexible as a rapier, as self-contained as a high priest of deception, as erudite as a dictionary, and yet professes to be ignorant when it serves his needs. He believes me harmless, he ignores Miss Clarke, and is in love with Miss Marshall. He says nothing of arms, and yet has a hand which was crippled by a sword-thrust, unless I misread the scar."

"Ah! You noticed that, too?"

"Yes, and more than that, I noticed that he left because the Arab at the door passed him some word."

"No!"

"Yes. I watched the fellow come forward, and saw that he gave Buhammei a quite significant look, indicating to him that he had something to say. A moment afterward, our friend became highly interested in fountains, an interest which he lost after walking alone with the doorman for less than thirty paces. Then, he found that he had forgotten an appointment."

The kaid looked at the American questioningly.

"Well?" he asked.

"That's all; but for those reasons, and no others, I interposed, and made myself a member of the party tomorrow."

"Ah!"

They sat in silence for a little, and the American

wondered if the other would speak. The kaid finally gave a twitch at his gold-embroidered caftan, and half-turned. He started as if to speak, then twisted in his seat.

"I say," he said, "take this."

He pulled from his pocket a silver whistle, which the American took and held up to a ray of light, inspecting it curiously.

"It's a whistle," the Englishman said.

"But —? "

"If you need help, there'll be a hundred picked men within hearing," the kaid answered incisively, and the American loved him for his brevity. Dick began to understand why this man was a general in the Moorish army. He peered through the darkness, but saw nothing save a set face outlined against the light of the night. He put the piece of metal in his pocket, and his lips had parted to speak, when the kaid turned toward him.

"Would you mind," the Englishman said, "watching him — Buhammei, I mean? He's a — a — rum dog — that!"

The captain straightened up, somewhat amused at the continued reticence, the stilted English accent and the unperturbed exterior of the adventurer before him. He began to think that his ridicule of the stage Englishman as seen in American dramas was ill founded, but he was surprised by a sudden change that came over his companion. The kaid leaned toward him, and in a voice scarcely above a whisper and in a tone grown suddenly sharp, incisive and trenchant, said:

“Captain Whitney, Morocco is on the verge of an outbreak — the most serious, perhaps, in a century of ill-fated wars, a century of intrigue, of corruption and cruel suppression. I’m going to stand by the Sultan, because he’s a good man, but weak. I need all the information I have so far failed to get. You can help me, and, what’s more, you will, because you’re a thoroughbred and unafraid. It is for you and me to stand shoulder to shoulder, unless we want to see the civilization of which we are a part trampled beneath the feet of a lot of robbing, thieving, murdering barbarians. I have so much confidence in you and your American readiness that I entrust my sister and Miss Marshall, whom you love, to your keeping, hoping by your observations to learn more. I am not wrong?”

He held out his hand, but the American, startled by the sharp change in the other’s manner, did not see it for a moment; then, catching its whiteness in the night, he extended his own, and the two clutched palms with a grip of alliance. The captain felt that the hand which held his own was like a thing of steel as it tightened strongly, and gave a sense of untold reserve and power. The kaid held his grasp for a moment as if there had been added to his side in the forthcoming crisis a power that could be depended upon to the very last when all others had failed. They stood up, the trim square figure in its flowing robes and the black-clad, sinewy form of the alien who had been drawn into the cause by accident, and they still held hands, each feeling by intuition that some time they were to do as the smaller man had said, “fight shoulder to shoulder”

for the preservation of their own and for that civilization in which they were an infinitesimal, but potent part. The American was like one to whom a revelation of hidden fires had been made, and he wished to hear his companion say something more; but the kaid released his hand, looked toward him for a moment, and then in the direction of the laughing voices.

"Ah," Clarke said, resuming his habitual slowness of speech, "nice garden, this, isn't it? I say, isn't it?"

As if this inconsequential remark ended their intimate interview, the general turned toward the distant group, and the American followed. Behind them, the aloes parted, and into the shade of the arbor stepped the fierce Arab of the doorway. His lean body was tensed, his lean face lighted with fanatical fires, and his lean hand in a sudden swiftness of hatred slipped into the folds of his garments, and jerked forth a damascened dagger, the bright edge and curved blade of which caught a wandering ray of light. Then, he slipped stealthily after the kaid, concealing his movements by the screen of tropical luxuriance with which the garden was filled.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHATEVER the porter's impulse to murder, it was for the time curbed, and the evening ended without tragedy.

Quite early in the morning, the clattering of horses' hoofs was heard in the street in front of the palace. A few minutes later, Buhammei, carefully attired in European riding-clothes, gloved and spurred as for a cross-country run, came into the inner court. He was met by the two girls, both of whom had drawn riding-skirts over the walking-dresses which would be necessary for the ascent of the mountain. Dick came down a few minutes later in khaki riding-clothes, with his feet incased in cavalry boots and wearing regulation spurs of the United States army.

The consul came out in his shirtsleeves, and looked them over critically, then gave a snort of contempt at the officer.

"Wait a moment, boy," he said, and left them. He returned a few minutes later with a huge pair of Mexican rowels, of which the chains and pendants jangled as he carried them in his hand.

"Put these on," he said. "When you set a pair of real spurs into an Arabian broncho, he knows he's got to 'tend to his knittin'. Won't try 'em, eh? Why?"

The officer, laughingly, protested that he preferred

those to which he was accustomed, but he handled the others with a touch that suggested affectionate remembrance.

"The ones the boys gave you on your fiftieth birthday!" he exclaimed, examining the gold inlay. "You must think a lot of me."

"Wouldn't lend 'em to any other man livin'," the consul asserted, as he led the way toward the big iron-plated and nail-studded doors opening on the street.

Four well-groomed horses of superb form, gaily caparisoned and saddled with the deep saddles of red that seem a part of the regular accoutrement in Morocco, champed their jingling, betasseled bits. Holding them was an Arab in snowy white, with a high-piled turban, mounted on another horse no less imposing. The dragoman, for such he appeared, did not deign to look at any of the party save the Moor, who apportioned an animal to each rider. The girls were assisted to their saddles, and Buhammei threw himself into his as gracefully as if all his life he had known no other home. He looked back at Whitney, who had paused to say something to the consul. As Dick started to mount his horse, the animal lunged sidewise as if he were on springs; but the officer, to the evident approval of the Moor and his dragoman, caught the pummel and cantel of the unfamiliar saddle, vaulted into it with one easy spring, and his feet seemed instinctively to catch the stirrups. The Honorable Bob burst into a laugh, and shouted: "There ain't no Arabian pony can fool a man who punched cows for ten years, is there, Dick?"

The officer smiled over his shoulder, but, while he

did so, caught an expressive look interchanged between Buhammei and his man, as if each wished the other to note that the alien knew how to ride. He had an idea that an ugly-dispositioned mount had been chosen for his benefit; but, with recollections of the hundreds of "bad ones" in the American West which he had conquered, he rather enjoyed the situation, as he tightened his reins, and forced the animal into line ahead of the dragoman, whose eyes bespoke grudging admiration.

The street in front of the consulate was one of the broadest in Fez, being nearly seven feet wide; but, a few paces beyond, it abruptly turned and narrowed, so that the riders were compelled to go in single file, and to exercise great care for the pedestrians, who almost invariably paused long enough to heap curses on them, to hope that their grandfathers were roasting in the nether world and that the women would be childless. Neither of the girls appeared to mind the storm of oburgation that everywhere assailed them, and the American, who did not know the language, although surmising the import of the spoken words, rode imperturbably forward. To Dick, the city appeared intensely melancholy. On either hand were endless high, bare walls, with no openings aside from the heavily ironed doors and the cross-shaped slits that served for loopholes. Now and then, they passed beneath heavy covered portions, of which the arches were so low that there was scant room for their heads, where everything was of a tunnel-like darkness, and the sounds of the horses' hoofs rang hollow, and came back in reverberations. Again, they passed walls that were cracked,

walls that were propped, and fragments of structures that had fallen into the street, and had not been removed, compelling them to find a road over the debris. They climbed a hill, and far below caught sight of women and boys washing great heaps of white garments on the wall bordering the Pearl River, appearing like automata leaping up and down, or pounding and mauling the inoffensive linen.

For the first time since the start of their journey, they were able to come abreast of one another for a moment, and Whitney now discovered that Buhammei wore a pair of huge blue glasses, which effectually concealed his eyes, and, if that was his wish, lent admirable disguise. The Moor intercepted the look of curiosity.

"My eyes," he said, "bother me sometimes, and I wear these to neutralize the reflection from the white walls."

Dick thought to himself that, so far, there had been no strong glare of light, and he wondered vaguely whether or not their conductor had reason for wishing to remain unknown. Yet, Buhammei's explanation had been so smilingly given that he felt himself in the wrong for attributing an evil motive to everything the man did. Charlotte had drawn up abreast of the Moor, and was chattering gaily, so that Whitney found himself in company with Margaret Clarke who rode thoughtfully, and had but little to say. He felt a desire to draw her into conversation, and commented on her horsemanship.

"Oh," she replied, looking at him with candid eyes, "I have ridden nearly all my life — not as you Amer-

icans ride, perhaps, because our galloping in so different. We run to jumpers, you know, in cross-country work. Have you noticed that Mr. Buhammei rides like an Arab? See how high his stirrups are. Why, they throw his legs almost into right angles."

Again, the officer reflected on the singularity of the fact that a man who claimed to have passed his whole life in Paris should have the saddle-seat peculiar to his forefathers. He wondered if some such thought had not entered the English girl's mind, but, if so, her face did not betray it. They came to a more traveled section, and were again driven to single file as they passed small, lumbering caravans of camels, Moors and Arabs on horseback and lines of men and women struggling into the city beside sweating donkeys laden with produce. Some of the women had children strapped to their backs with scarfs, and found difficulty in shrouding their faces as they approached the foreigners.

"They needn't take so much trouble on my account," the officer laughed to Margaret Clarke; but she did not catch the jest, which pertained to a particular crone of perhaps thirty years of age, whose distorted, wrinkled face bore every sign of hatred.

"It is their religion, you know," the English girl answered, "and, after all, she has virtues that are her own."

"Which are?"

"She is a mother."

"Well?"

"She obeys the injunctions of her religion."

"But are these virtues, Miss Clarke?"

"You cannot believe otherwise," she said, looking at the American in amazement. "You certainly do not think that to fill our niche in life as best we can is to be without some merit?"

"Ah," he replied, "I did not believe you so serious — that your views of life were of such prosaic trend."

She rode for a minute without speaking, and then looked up at him again.

"I try, Captain Whitney," she said, "to hold sane views, and endeavor to suppress sentimentality and superstition."

"Yet, you are religious."

He was ashamed of his words before they were completed, because they sounded agnostic, whereas he had meant them only as a challenge. She looked at him quite gravely, and made no reply. He felt that he had been given a chilling reproof, and would have said more, but he was compelled to drop behind again, as they were once more entering a tortuous alley-way, which twisted and turned as if weaving its part in the pattern of a maze.

He did not have another opportunity to talk to Margaret, until, by a devious route, they came to the street leading out of the city walls through the gate of Lions. Between castellated walls and crumbling watch-towers, high and trap-like, they approached a venerable port, the gray, battlemented crown of which had given foothold to masses of growing weeds and a half-starved palm tree that struggled for life between two openings leading up from a crevice. His mind was drawn from the conversation by the sight of the soldiers

who stood guard without, lounging in the spots of shade, wearing caftans of many colors, their green girdles holding daggers with broad curves, and their business-like sabres with rhinoceros-hide handles. Some of them paced to and fro with their modern rifles in correct position and their yellow, heelless boots making no sound. Mentally contrasting these men with some of the troops he had seen on the way to Fez, the officer thought to himself that Kaid Clarke's discipline had borne some fruits at least, and that these men looked a little more like soldiers than those who were not under the general's eye. Even though they wore the colors of the rainbow, their arms were shining, and their clothing was clean. A man with a blue mantle, white caftan, yellow girdle and red-embroidered boots saluted him as he passed, and, turning his head back to catch another glimpse of this gorgeous subaltern, he discovered the man in the act of giving orders to four others who stood near their horses.

Charlotte and Buhammei had gained a bit, and they now halted in front of a small, white, square building, low domed and surrounded by a cluster of palm trees, before which a group of Arabs in dirty white burnouses was squatting.

"It is a *cuba*," Captain Whitney's companion explained, pointing at it with her crop. "They are burial places of saints, where the faithful come to pay homage, and where the descendants of the saint beg for alms! Saintship is hereditary among these people. Have a care!" she called suddenly, and she struck his horse a blow over the crupper, whereat the animal leaped

forward so sharply that, had Dick not been an expert rider, he must have been unseated. He looked back in astonishment as they cantered off, and discovered a snarling-faced old man shaking his fist at him, and howling curses in a cracked falsetto voice.

"This is the saint," she said; and, for the first time, she laughed a free, joyous and unrestrained note, as she bent over her saddle. "I saw that he was about to confer honor by spitting at you from where he had crept up at the side of the road. Merely a custom of the country, I assure you."

The captain frowned on learning of the threatened insult, and clenched his crop more tightly.

"Oh, no, that would never have done," she said, reprovingly. "One would incur undying enmity by striking a saint for so trivial a thing as that, and particularly if one happened to be a dog of an unbeliever."

"Nice country, this Morocco," the American said, recovering his good humor, and glad that something had arisen to break her reserve. "But, for goodness sake, Miss Clarke, don't hit my horse again. I —"

"Oh, you are better able to master a horse than an addled man who is invested with the dignity of a saint," she answered, tauntingly. "I knew that before I came to your rescue in the only way I could."

"Great presence of mind," he said, as he drew abreast of her horse; "great!"

He looked back once more, and discovered four horsemen slowly galloping after them, and wondered if they would respond to the call of the whistle that he had

in his vest-pocket. Their pace was so rapid that they were soon close up to Buhammei, in the lead, and the American girl, who was telling some story and appeared in highest spirits, enjoying the day with all the artlessness of a child. For an hour, the party rode steadily past other tombs of saints and between occasional groves of aloes, orange or lemon trees, and once they passed the clustered black tents of a party of nomads. From the darkened recesses, indescribably dirty and unkempt occupants stared at them, and aroused long enough to launch their maledictions against the riders. The American tried the effect of a handful of coppers thrown among the revilers, whereupon the cries changed to *Bismallah Salamu alikum!*

"What does it mean?" he asked.

"In the name of God, peace be with you," Margaret interpreted.

"The blessings of the Moslem God come cheap," he responded, with sarcasm.

Once more he had an insight into her character which increased his admiration. She turned until she faced him, and looked directly at him.

"I do not like that in you," she said, contemplatively. "To deride the religious belief of others isn't worthy, and — I want to like you."

He felt, as he rode beside her, that the rebuke was well merited. She spoke again, as though wishing to change the subject and make him feel at ease.

"See," she said, directing his attention to a level plain beyond, "there are troops exercising at the base of Mount Zalag."

Out beyond the plain, a rugged peak lifted itself above the level, and he saw at its base a squadron of fifty men with flying mantles and fluttering red banners, deploying backward and forward across the field. With a quicker heart-beat, he thought of his own company, whose thundering hoofs had so often followed him to drill. The riders were quite close to the road, so that he had a full view of them, as they charged across the field in a wild run, forming a serried line that appeared to skim, rather than ride over, the ground. Their sabers were held high in air, their heads were erect, their horses ran with outstretched necks and flattened ears, and all appeared deadly intent on their formation. He gave an exclamation of approval, and would have halted; but Buhammei, who had dropped back, displayed some annoyance.

"We haven't time to watch them now, captain," he said. "Some other time, you may see them. It's rather singular that they should have chosen this as a drill ground on the morning of our visit."

He spurred his horse to a gallop, and led the way. The American looked at the English girl, curious to know whether she, too, had noticed the innovation, but she seemed absorbed in some other thought.

"They are very cruel," she said. "When my brother first came here, they had stirrups with one sharp iron corner with which they used to lacerate the sides of their horses, until the dripping blood stained the folds of the soldiers' mantles. He compelled them to use dull spurs, and, for a time, it seemed that there would be a revolution; but, now, they have grown more

merciful — so much so that they lead the poor beasts to water without hobbling their tired legs.”

Still looking longingly back over his shoulder, the officer rode on to the foot of the mountain, where they were to dismount. The ascent towered above them for a clean thousand feet, its hard, iron-cut peak rising into the limpidity of blue sky, like a stern sentinel keeping watch through all the ages over the ancient city of the Magreb. Buhammei spoke to the dragoman, who looked surly and disappointed about something, and the girls slipped off the cumbersome riding-skirts, and stood in their short garments, ready for the climb. The morning sun had not become hot enough to render the temperature distressing, and they began the ascent with jocular comments and light conversation. Dick Whitney again found himself the escort of Margaret Clarke, who now and then gave him her hand when they came to some difficult spot, or, with him, clung to some friendly bush while stopping for breath in the steep climb, which in places was enough to tax the strength of an experienced mountaineer. The English girl seemed endowed with an endurance as great as his own, and he could not help observing the easy grace with which she stepped from point to point and the decision with which she placed her feet. It seemed that every line of her body lent itself to effort. Once, when a stone was dislodged in front of them, and went skipping past to the mountain's foot, she laughed outright, and said she believed Mr. Buhammei to be the least sure-footed of all, and hoped his waiting dragoman had sought shelter.

They gained the rocky crest, and, half-spent, sat down in this altitude of profound silence to rest, and looked below them, where, bordered by the yellow fields of growing grain, the land undulated away toward the ancient city in the south-west. The clarity of the morning made the town a thing of infinite beauty and peace, the distance obliterating its ruin and uncleanness, and leaving it a great splotch of white and silent beauty. A sparkling thread shone clear and distinct where the Pearl River cut the old and the modern cities in twain, as it wound through the narrow valley between the two high hills on which the town is situated. On top of these could be seen in towering loneliness the two ruined fortifications, brooding over the white, terraced buildings, the forest of flowers and minarets, the green border of gardens and palms, the blackened city walls with their battlements, the white temples and cemeteries without, and the long dark lines of tree-bordered roads.

In the great outspread plain, where swept the broad band of the Sehu River and the winding paths of the Pearl and the River of the Azure Fountain, there met the eye tiny moving things, which they knew to be caravans, coming, perhaps, from the very passes of the Atlas Mountains, of which the purple peaks, dim and distant, seemed a barrier to the far south. Off to the east, in the direction of the fortress of Teza, which holds the pass crowning the divide between the Sebu and the Mulaia Rivers, everything was hazy in the sunlight; but back of them to the north, where the mountains of the Rif were piled up against the skies.

all was lifeless and still, the air lending an enchantment to the immense distances that separated them from this land of decay and the virulent, palpitant modern world of which they were a part. The whiteness, the ruin, the backwardness and the repellent mystery of Africa were on the spectators, as they sat and watched the lights and shadows play over the plains that had known the wars of the prophets, the jealousy of the mighty Eastern caliph, Haroun-el-Reschid, and the rise of the jeweled City of the Hatchet, so named from legendary tales of its founding. What a capital it had been when, under the dynasty of the Almoadi, its ninety thousand homes, ten thousand shops, splendid baths and gorgeous palaces, rich libraries and gigantic mosques, had gained for it the names of Queen City, the Athens of Africa, the Rendezvous of Europe and the Levant! How many caravans had swept through the eighty-six gates within its frowning walls, to pour the products of three continents into its lap! What has become of the thirty suburbs that clustered around it, when it was more splendid than far-famed Bagdad? What commerce had been carried on in the great network of canals that ran through its gardens, between the city wall and the highest hill, now overgrown between green banks and winding past dead fountains, broken aqueducts, toppled bastions and fallen towers! Were the stories of moonlit nights and water fêtes, in which caliphs and queens of the harem took part, for which the Flower of the East traversed long stretches of desert that she might attend, mere myths?

The American found himself drawing a sigh at the

thought of all that dead civilization, of which nothing remained but the crumbling sarcophagus below. He looked at Margaret Clarke, and she, too, appeared wrapped in some similar thought. The consul's daughter was watching, through a pair of binoculars, the evolutions of the cavalrymen at the mountain's foot, her eyes sparkling, her cheeks glowing and her hands restlessly directing the lenses.

The Moor had removed his glasses for the first time, and his eyes were filled with an unfathomable melancholy. His knees were drawn up almost to his chin, his fingers interlaced where his arms came together in a clasp before him, and his whole attitude that of one who grieves for past glories. The officer, looking at him, regretted that the man was not in his national costume; he had a fleeting sympathy for what Buhammei must see behind the realism of all this, far back into the times when his forefathers were mighty, and the Prophet ruled the world.

Dick hesitated to speak, or to disturb the silence that had settled over them in their individual contemplations as they looked downward over the elongated top of the stately old mountain, which had witnessed so many changes. He arose quite softly to his feet, and, with hands behind his back, walked away. The others bestowed a glance on him, then returned to reverie as his boot-heels clinked over the bare rocks. No one said a word. The spell of Africa and its dead life was over them all; the Moor and the English girl returned to their dreams, while the American girl again became

absorbed in the little world of movement in detail revealed by her binoculars.

Thoughtfully, and without wish to disturb, the American cavalryman walked to the end of Zalag's crest, leaned his elbows on a rock, and, half-stooping, looked down along its rocky shoulder. Betrayed by their white turbans, two heads, animated and revolving, appeared just above the top of a boulder a short distance below, but almost immediately disappeared from sight.

Dick Whitney started back, and, as if he were on the frontier with watchful eyes of warring Indians fixed on him, dropped to one knee behind the rock over which he had been looking, and felt for his pistol. His first inclination was to retreat with the members of his party. Then, reasoning that it would be foolish to alarm them, unless positive evidence of danger were acquired, he decided to reconnoiter. He ran lightly down the slope to the rock behind which the turbans had disappeared, and, with pistol in hand, peered cautiously round one of its worn and scarred edges. Without waiting for a second sight, he leaped from his hiding place, with pistol raised.

At his feet, distorted and huddled as it had fallen, lay a still figure, on whose white burnous above the heart was a rapidly increasing blotch of sanguinary red. By its side lay a long desert rifle, apparently dropped from a nerveless hand. It needed no closer inspection to recognize death!

Stooping above this wreck of tragedy, and calmly wiping his saber on the dead man's garments, was

another Arab, who turned at the sound of the captain's approach, and faced him.

At sight of the officer's



pistol, he grinned amicably, and held up an open hand in token of friendship. From the corner of his eye down across one edge of a nostril, over the thin lips and to the point of his chin, he was disfigured by a terrible scar.

"Be not in haste, Captain Whitney," he said in English; and the officer, astounded by hearing his native tongue and name under such gruesome circumstances, lowered his pistol. The scar-faced man calmly reached over, finished the cleansing of his blade, and thrust it into his belt, while the American stood frowning, still holding his weapon in a position for immediate use.

"See," the Arab said, "I am your friend." He fumbled inside the neck of his tunic, and drew from it a tiny silver whistle. "You have one like it, have you not?"

The officer, looking closely, saw that this was the counterpart of the one given him by the kaid.

"I was sent here by your friend," the Arab went on, "you to — ah — what you call it in English? — to protect — that is it! Here, one other thing I have — I forget almost!" Again, he fumbled in his clothing, and produced a slip of folded paper, which he stretched out with a steady hand.

Dick opened it, and read:



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ASTOR LENOX
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

"DEAR WHITNEY:

"This is my most trusted man. Do whatever he says.
CLARKE."

The officer slipped the pistol back into his pocket. The dark face of the man before him broke into a smile, and was then thrust forward toward Whitney.

"Ah!" he said. "You have many friends here." Wheeling suddenly, he waved his hand, as if giving a signal. From a boulder beside him, a turbaned head popped up so suddenly that the officer started back with an exclamation, and then, looking beyond it, saw a whole group of dark faces intently watching his every movement, while four other men had stepped out into full view. The scar-faced man gave another signal, and, as suddenly as they had appeared, every form dropped from sight, as if by kaleidoscopic change, and the American had nothing but the sense of memory, the dead man at his feet, and the grinning Arab, to convince him that he had not been dreaming.

"Are you satisfy?" the man said, fumbling the whistle at his throat. "Then, listen. Go back! Quick! Say nothing! You are safe! I, Sidi Suleyman, say it!"

Dick gave one last, frowning look at the white heap, stared for a moment into Sidi Suleyman's impassive eyes, then, convinced of the man's friendliness, turned and retraced his steps along the mountain's cone. And he realized that, even there, on this peak of infinite silence and seeming peace, he was in the heart of a country where life was short and murder abrupt.

CHAPTER FIVE

CAPTAIN WHITNEY, still a trifle unnerved by the sight of tragedy and resolved to obey the instructions of Sidi Suleyman, found Charlotte and Margaret seated on either side of Buhammei, who was pointing out over the plain below. The officer seated himself so quietly behind them that they did not observe him. He leaned forward, and listened intently, thinking thereby to gain some connecting link with what he had just witnessed.

"Yes," Buhammei said, as if answering some question and totally unconcerned regarding his surroundings, "it is a city of glorious history. It was founded in 808 by Edris, a prince of the house of Abassidi; but there is a legend among the faithful that on the site of Fez once stood another mighty city, which flourished for more than eighteen hundred years, declined, was lost and forgotten and finally obliterated. At one time, it had more than a half-million inhabitants."

"And now has less than two hundred thousand," the English girl said, sadly. "I fear its glories are gone forever."

Buhammei looked up at her fixedly, and gave a short, quivering shrug of his shoulders.

"Perhaps not," he replied. "Who knows but some man may come, like the Moses of your Bible, to lead the people of the Prophet back from the decay into

which they are now going under the rule of Muley Mohammed."

The girl had seated herself beside her friend, and Whitney now moved to an inviting boulder by the Moor. The captain, still thinking of the scene he had so recently left, began to wonder if, in suspecting Buhammei of a more-or-less-direct complicity in it, he were not again doing the Moor an injustice. He shifted his seat, that he might get a better view of Buhammei's face. The latter, frowning somberly, was staring at the distant minarets. Margaret Clarke appeared thoughtful.

"You do not like His Majesty, Mr. Buhammei," she challenged, in response to his last remark.

"Me?" he fenced. "Oh, I don't know. Why do you say that?"

"Because you intimate that he is leading his people to ruin."

He laughed softly, the white teeth showing brightly between his thin red lips and black beard. He did not answer her directly, but seemed anxious to turn the subject from personalities.

"His has been a great dynasty," he said contemplatively, with his eyes fixed in an absorbed stare on the far distances of the Atlas mountains. "He comes of the Shereefs-Fileli, who originated in the province of Taflet which is on the very borders of the desert. And for more than two hundred and fifty years the throne has always been occupied by a Fileli."

He spoke with something of pride that made the officer doubt whether this was in truth an enemy of the ruling race.

"I can't see from my limited knowledge of the country," Whitney said, "where the Sultan makes any grave errors, but I do not profess to know anything of affairs here."

The Moor looked at the speaker as though wishing to know whether the American had any ulterior motive in the remark, and apparently decided in the negative. He answered quite at ease.

"The errors of Muley Mohammed," he said, "are of the faith — inasmuch as he adopts ways of the unbelievers — and also of omission. This is a time, captain, when a nation must be able to fight and show its power before it can command respect. This Sultan is not upbuilding his capacity for war."

"But how can he?" the officer asked, half-absently, his mind still over the crest of the mountain.

"In many ways."

"What would you do if you were Sultan, Mr. Bushammei?"

The Moor faced the speaker so quickly that the American thought him offended; then, as if satisfied that he was not being laughed at, he again looked down at the city across the plains, and out toward the distant blue peaks. Dick, in his interest, resolved to dismiss the murder from his mind.

"I would tax every foreigner who came into Morocco," the Moor answered slowly, "and permit no unbeliever a permanent residence. I would take from the Jews the riches they have taken from the people. I would make religion paramount, and hold the unbelievers off. I would allow no foreigner to participate

in any way in the affairs of the country." His eyes were gleaming, and he had spoken with unnecessary fervor. He caught the American's start of surprise, and pulled himself together, turning his speech into the common-place by an abrupt change. He laughed in rather an easy way, and went on:

"Now, see what you have provoked me into saying. But it is hard for you to imagine what a Moor, a follower of the Prophet, must feel. Of course, I'm not the Sultan just now, so you are in small danger, any of you, of being taxed. A plain gentleman of private and small means, who has passed much of his life in Paris and London, should really have no views concerning his country. He should do as all the others do — let it go to the dogs!"

He flicked the ashes from his cigarette with long, slow-moving fingers, and appeared quite uninterested in anything that had been said, or in pursuing the topic any further. He was calm and motionless, and leaned back in a graceful attitude, appearing for the moment a refined type of the cosmopolitan *boulevardier*. There was nothing about him suggesting a man of action or of deep feeling, but rather an ultra refinement that would prevent him from ever doing anything more than he had done in the time the foreigners had known him — loiter here and there, attend balls and operas, drink tea in the afternoons, and apparently have no serious motive in life or its doings. The American thought him an anomaly, and concluded that the Sidi Suleyman affair was not connected with him. Yet, the captain was convinced that this man, whose ordinary talk was the

light speech of the *salon*, was capable of stripping off a mask, and stepping boldly out in tragic form. He wished that the fellow would talk more of his country, but the Moor, instead, began the whimsical recountal of a Parisian experience, mentioning names familiar to the two girls, although unknown to the officer.

"Come," he said, at the conclusion of his story, "hadn't we better return?"

He leaped to his feet with a stealthy agility, extended his hand to Charlotte Marshall, and assisted her to arise; and she, still laughing at the recollection of the tale, stood beside him, drawing on her gloves. Dick offered to help Margaret to her feet; but she either did not see his hand, or declined aid, and stood erect, tucking back stray wisps of hair that had been blown across her face by a breezy gust which skirled across the top of the peak. Her face was a trifle flushed, and she gave the officer a feeling that, while annoyed about something, she was too self-contained to say anything. He walked in the rear as the party now headed down the hill again, and in his curiosity over all that had taken place he almost forgot the men of the mountains, who had been round them throughout their stay.

Chancing to think of them at last, he stopped, and looked behind toward the top of the peak they had left, which appeared untenanted. When he faced about to resume his journey, he discovered that Buhammei also had stopped, and was regarding him with unblinking eyes. He felt a trifle disconcerted, but the Moor again led the descent without saying a word, or showing any curiosity as to the officer's pause. In all the down-

ward journey, Whitney had no opportunity to help Margaret Clarke, and they said nothing, the few minutes necessary for their downhill walk being passed in a silence that possessed all. At the bottom, they found the dragoman, sitting near the drowsing horses' heads, his legs crossed, his turban piled high. He was making patterns from the sand which he allowed to slip slowly between his fingers in a long, slender stream as continuous and regular as though dropped from the bulb of an hour-glass. At the sound of their steps, he sprang to his feet, and made a low bow to Buhammei, who answered it with a slight gesture.

They gained their saddles, still without saying other than the little comments incidental to mounting, and, two and two, rode away, the dragoman in the lead as before. The American shaded his eyes, and looked over toward the field where the cavalrymen had been drilling, and saw a band of unmounted horses, guarded by men whom in his western days he would have called wranglers, while vivid splotches of color, lounging in the shadows beyond, indicated that the troopers were loafing and resting after their morning's work. He wondered if they were waiting for the return of the scar-faced man. He called Margaret's attention to them, but she gave nothing more than a glance and a nod, and then looked ahead to where her friend and the Moor, side by side, were trotting steadily in advance. Already, they were so far ahead that their words were indistinguishable, and came as aimlessly floating sounds. The American looked keenly at the girl beside him, and felt that some reason must exist for her silence.

"What is troubling you, Miss Clarke?" he asked.

As if surprised at his perception, she looked at him, and, smiling faintly, compressed her lips.

"I am angry with myself," she answered. Then, after an instant's pause, she looked him fairly in the eyes, and laughed softly. "At first, I was angry with you, but I've decided you are not culpable."

"At me? What for, may I ask?"

"Because you didn't answer Mr. Buhammei's rather rude speech. At first, it seemed to me that you should have arisen in defense of the foreigners, and then, when I thought it over, I concluded that it was I who should have arisen in behalf of my brother, who, after all, has no call upon your friendship."

"You think his reference to the participation of foreigners in governmental work was a covert stab at Kaid Hamilton Clarke?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Ah! That was not the portion of his speech that impressed me most; but, rather, his expressed desire to hold all the outside world aloof. I said nothing, Miss Clarke, because to tell the truth, I paid less heed to what he said than the manner in which he said it, and — well, at the moment — I was thinking of something else."

She turned full in her saddle, and faced him. Her lips half-parted, her eyes curious.

"So, I wasn't mistaken?" she said. "Do you know that was what I noticed the most — his manner. But I thought, an instant later, that I had been mistaken, because — well, because I dislike him. I wonder if you feel as I do about that man — a perpetual question as

to who and what he really is! If that polished shell, those decidedly elegant manners, that constant grace, that unfailing habit of doing everything as if with premeditation, were to be lost, what would the other man be, Captain Whitney? Don't you think that, beneath the sleek and shining coat and the languid repose, there is a tiger that could move as swiftly as the wind, and could kill with a wild intoxication of cruelty? Don't you? Do you trust him?"

She was leaning a little toward him with her face very earnest, and he, in the thoughts conjured by her words, frowned deeply. He felt that her woman's intuition was putting into speech the half-formed estimates that had been correlated in his own mind through infinitesimal things. He gave a deep breath, and gathered his reins more tightly before answering.

"I don't know," he said, slowly. "I cannot believe he is what he seems to be, and, for that reason, I do not trust him. But I am fascinated by what I have thought to be flitting glimpses of the real character, which he cannot always conceal. Ah, they are waiting for us to come up with them."

He touched his mount lightly with the spurs, and they galloped to where the others were sitting with their horses headed toward them. Buhammei was plainly unaware of any thing tragic on the trip.

"Well, you two must find each other entertaining," the American girl called, in her rich soprano as they approached. "Mr. Buhammei suggests that we reënter the city by the gate of El Ghisa. What do you think? Say 'yes,' and don't raise objections, because I want

to go that way. I'm simply being nice and thoughtful in asking you."

The American, totally unfamiliar with distances, and not knowing how far out of the direct route it would take them, turned inquiringly to Margaret Clarke, and she nodded her head.

"It isn't much farther," she said, "and time with us is not particularly precious."

The consul's daughter and Buhammei turned their horses round. Almost at that instant, from behind a clump of aloes, and so close that he was almost beneath the feet of the Moor's horse, came a gigantic Berber in an immense white mantle, the folds of which fell almost to his heels. He was walking with a majestic poise, his head thrown forward and his eyes half-closed. At the sound of the clattering hoofs, he leaped back, with his hand half-raised in a startled gesture. His lips parted, and it seemed that he was about to curse the rider. But his eyes traveled upward to Buhammei's face, his mouth opened still wider, and, before any one could surmise his intention, he swept forward, caught the edge of the Moor's riding-coat between his gnarled brown fingers, and pressed it to his lips. Almost with the same motion, he dropped to one knee in the dust of the road, and bowed his head.

The Moor's face contorted into a fearful expression of anger, his lips snarled, he jerked back as if in fear of assassination, and then raised his heavy riding-crop, and brought it swishing downward across the white and bent back, with a blow that sounded like the smack of an open hand across a face. Dick instinctively flamed.



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He drove the spurs into his horse until the startled animal gave a great bound forward. Behind him, he heard Margaret exclaim, as if from between clenched teeth, "How terrible!" He was madly intent on dragging the crop from Buhammei's hand. And then, before he could put his thought into execution, he halted with surprise, and curbed his rearing mount.

Instead of resenting the blow, the stately Berber was mumbling something that sounded like thanks. He did not even attempt to arise from his kneeling posture, and still held the folds of his mantle together across his breast, as if soliciting another blow. Buhammei, who had paid no attention to his companions, thrust his hand into a pocket, and pulled his horse alongside the kneeling figure. He bent far down from the saddle, and whispered something in such a low voice that none of the others could hear, then turned to ride away. Dick, amazed at the whole proceeding, quieted his horse, and pulled abreast of the English girl. As they passed the Berber, he saw that the man was scratching in the dust with one hand, and that in the black palm of the other were shining pieces of gold.

Whitney looked at the girl by his side, and taking her unawares, discovered that she was staring at him with admiration and gratitude unveiled; but her eyes shifted to her horse's head, and she flushed perceptibly before she spoke.

"I thank you for what you meant to do," she said, turning toward him.

The American bit his lip, as if feeling that he had acted impetuously, and muttered:

"I couldn't help it. But did you ever see anything like that in all your life?"

Her answer was trenchant and expressive:

"The brute!" she exclaimed.

As though answering her epithet, a voice called out from in front, and they glanced up to see Buhammei looking at them from over his shoulder. They advanced until all four were abreast.

"Pardon me," the Moor said, with great suavity. "That may have seemed cruel to you, but I know the beggars of my own country. He had no business to surprise me in that way. I know how to check their mendicancy!"

He ended with a strained laugh, and, forging ahead again, placed his horse alongside that of the consul's daughter. The other two, dropping behind, looked at each other for a long moment, each with an unspoken comment.

"Do men in this country give beggars a handful of gold?" the officer asked softly, leaning toward his companion.

"Ah, was that man a beggar?" was the baffling response. "He looked to me like a Berber sheik, who, for some unknown reason, is on foot."

Dick reverted mentally to the death on the mountain; his suspicions of a conspiracy again became keen and questioning.

They turned into a road that skirted the city and wound away in a depth of bordering orange- and lemon-trees, which hung in drooping heaviness overhead, their fruit-laden branches intertwined in neighborly intimacy.

For some minutes, they rode in silence, each thinking of the recent incident, and perplexed. A white *cuba*, surrounded by the customary number of squatting figures, was reached, and a decrepit old man hobbled up to bestow the saintly blessings, or curses, dependent upon the results of his solicitations. They passed, and heard the thin, quavering screams of rage that followed, then found themselves once more on an open plain. Dick Whitney turned back, to see if the saint was still standing in the road, and, as he did so, there broke out into the open two by two, the foremost horsemen of the troops they had seen at the foot of Zalag. Now, they doubled up in close order, until they were four abreast, and came galloping onward, keeping an exact distance and maintaining an espionage over the party's movements. The American gave a startled exclamation, and looked ahead to where Charlotte and Buhammei were riding steadily along the broad, white roadway. They did not seem to hear the rolling noise of the following squadron, and were talking earnestly. The Moor was gesticulating with one hand, and pointing to the roadside now and then, as though calling Charlotte's attention to passing objects.

Off before them arose the time-worn gate of El Ghisa, its battlements sharply outlined against the pallid blue of the sky, and the soldiers guarding it appeared at that distance to be mere marionettes in brilliant colors, a flaming red predominating. They were quite well up to the gate when, for the first time, Buhammei looked back, and became suddenly aware of the following horsemen. Dick was so close to him that he could see the outlines

of the Moor's face harden, and he noticed also another fact; that the Moor, after his meeting with the Berber, had again adopted his huge glasses, without which, during all the time on the mountain and the first part of their return journey, he had appeared quite comfortable. But the American had no time for further speculations.

The gray old gates received them; they passed beneath the crumbling ornamentations and between tessellated walls, of which the high, bare surfaces were built for further defense in case the outer portals should fall beneath assault. Soon, they found themselves threading the narrow alleys of the ancient city.

Dick, hearing the persistent clatter of hoofs behind, feeling the silver whistle in his pocket, and recalling the tragic incident of the day, had a sense of great confusion and intrigue. He was not certain but that the anxieties which had assailed both him and the kaid when the excursion was proposed were well grounded. Yet, he was compelled to admit that he knew little more of the incomprehensible, but apparently frank, Mr. Buhammei than when he had started out in the morning, and he could in no wise connect the Moor with the dead man on the bare face of old Zalag.



CHAPTER SIX

THE Honorable Bob wore an air of great mystery, which, like an arabic burnous, spread itself around him in voluminous folds, swaddling his big frame in many wrappings, concealing his head with its peak, and lending a definite impression that he was smothering with a secret.

"'Most all in, ain't you?" he asked, as he met the riding party in the inner court after their excursion, when a glance around had satisfied him that Buhammei was not with them. "How do you like it? Anything worth lookin' at?"

The officer had no time to reply, for the consul folded, rather than gathered, his daughter into his arms, and gave her a resounding smack on the forehead, released her, and held both of the English girl's hands in his own big fists, looking down at her fondly.

"Why — yes," Charlotte assented, straightening out the flowers on her corsage. "We found something worth seeing — Mr. Buhammei."

"Humph!"

"Well, he was! He knows all about Fez and everybody that has ever been Sultan, and who the saints are, and how many people lived here several hundred years ago; and he beat a beggar that frightened his horse, and —"

"Beat a beggar? The sheepherder!"

"Who? Mr. Buhammei?"

"No-o; both of 'em."

"Well, a man came up and said something, and Mr. Buhammei hit him before he thought, and then gave him some money."

"Squared himself, eh? Not that I ain't had hankerins to hammer some of 'em myself; but it's different with him. He sort of belongs here. Well?"

"That's all. Only, I think he's a little sentimental at times."

The consul's face suddenly lost its smile, and he stared at his daughter intently, turning his back in the meanwhile on the officer, who was scrutinizing the catch of his cigarette-case, which had failed to clasp.

"Charlie," the consul asked, "where was Dick? Why didn't he beat that feller? What did this man Buhammei say to you?"

She laughed, read the gravity of his face, and sobered. She took a few steps, and stood before him, then put her hands up to his shoulders, and answered his attempt at reproof.

"Good old Dick," she said, "was just where I wanted him to be, taking care of Margy. Margy was doing just what I wanted her to, entertaining Dick. Buhammei rode ahead with me, just where I wanted him to ride. And he didn't say anything that either you or I could take offense at."

She stopped suddenly, and looked at him gravely, meeting his eyes with a candor that could not be questioned, and flashing to him a world of understanding.

"Dad," she said, in a changed voice and quite low,

"you know that, if he had said anything which I didn't like, I would have told you, or — or — answered for myself. I am still your girl."

He looked at her a long, long time, his hands behind her shoulders, hers still resting on his. His drawn brows, gray and ragged, slowly lifted, smoothed away, and resumed their wonted whimsical, humorous, discerning lines. He gathered her a little closer, and both disregarded the flowers that were being crushed against her breast. Without a word of rebuke or question, he bent his head slowly and gently forward, and kissed her full upon the serious, pouting lips; and then, as if to say more would be to offer insult, he released her, and whirled on his heels until he faced the officer.

"How d' you like that hoss? Guess you're the first man they ever saw pile into a saddle without touchin' a stirrup. When these fellers here get up, they make about as much fuss about it as they do loadin' a ship."

"Their clothing is cumbersome," suggested the officer, with a smile.

"No, it ain't that! They just don't know anythin' about ridin', except when they get some place where they can 'touch leather.' Then, they're all right."

A new thought struck the Honorable Bob as he looked at the trim, well-clad man in front of him, and he came forward as if on the eve of imparting a state secret. Dick, watching, had a desire to take the consul's arm, and walk away to some secluded spot where they might not be overheard; but he decided to stand his ground. The Honorable Bob's countenance had become fixed and determined again. He bent down

toward the officer, and lowered his voice. He put one hand up to his mouth, and whispered:

"Say, Dick, when you get back to a white man's country, get me a necktie like that one you've got on, and — and a dozen number seventeen collars. Mine's about all played out."

This portentous message delivered, he led the way to the dinner-table, where he always insisted on carving, and in the act displayed a thumb round which was twisted a cumbersome piece of rag. Dick decided to hold his secret until he could get the kaid alone.

"Injured?" Margaret asked, being the first one to notice the thumb; and the others added questions.

"Yes," the consul said, holding it up awkwardly. "Been carpenterin' this afternoon, and, not bein' over handy with tools, banged it with a hammer."

"But what were you doing?" Charlotte insisted.

"That's my secret," the Honorable Bob answered, again assuming his air of mystery. "Better all hurry, and eat your dinner, because, after it's over, I've got a little surprise for you."

He chuckled, and his face had a distinctly boyish expression. They chaffed him throughout the meal, and made venturesome guesses as to the character of the surprise; but he preserved an owl-like silence, and declined to be drawn forth. When the meal was done, with the gaiety of a boy, he led them into the garden.

"He's going to show us the garden," Charlotte suggested. "He has probably built a trellis, all with his own little hands."

They walked away along graveled paths to the ex-

treme end, and then, with a great display of ceremony, the consul produced a huge iron key, and fitted it into a door from which ivy had been stripped but that day. The girls gave exclamations of surprise.

"Why, who on earth ever thought there was a door here?" Margaret cried. "I supposed this was a solid wall."

"So did I," the American girl asserted.

The consul turned back the bolts, and threw the door open, disclosing a tiny paradise, walled in with high gray walls on all four sides, and exquisitely laid out in lawns and pergolas, tiny terraces of marble, and flowers and fine trees. It was lighted throughout with iron lanterns, which lent a mellow radiance to the whole setting. The consul laughed at the girls' surprise and delight, but still preserved his secret as he led them toward the farther end.

Almost against the wall stood a low white building, constructed largely of marble, but of architecture different from that prevalent in Moorish buildings. It was fronted with a deep verandah, the roof of which was supported by Corinthian columns. Broad marble steps led up to it, and its inclosed portion was railed with marble, cut into delicate open-work patterns. From the roof of the verandah hung other Moorish lanterns, with tinted-glass sides and wrought-iron trceries.

They stepped inside, to discover that it contained three rooms, or divisions, the two ends cut off by graceful façades with arched tops and pilasters richly ornamented in dull inlaid arabesque. The ends were win-

dowless, save high up in the vaulted tops, where small and ornamental openings were filled with marble tracery of the same design as that of the balustrade on the verandah. In the rear wall of the middle apartment were two large windows, each with double shutters of some dark heavy wood, plentifully bound with wrought-iron bands and heavy nails, spiked into intricate designs similar to those of the big front doors, which were swinging back against the wall.

The walls were bare, except in four places where exquisite weapons of different designs surrounded shields beautifully inlaid with gold. The other rooms, likewise, were devoid of furniture, save that in the far end of each was a couch covered with old tapestries, the colors of which had mellowed with age. The floors were in splendid mosaic of brilliant hues, the patterns being worked in a minute square tile, of which the glaze reflected the lights that came from massive black candelabra suspended by chains.

"I didn't let 'em change anything about the place," the consul said, as he pointed to the arms. "I had to nail one saber — that big curved one — on the wall myself. That's when I embarrassed myself by hittin' my thumb. Now, come on out here," he said. "Got somethin' else to show you."

Four chairs, which they recognized as having been at one time in the old palace, were on the verandah, and they seated themselves, while the consul gave an order to a white-clad Arab, who had been respectfully waiting on the lawn. The man disappeared into a hole in the ground, and directly in front of the balcony a gigan-

tic colored fountain sprang into play, its waters illuminated from below, and changing slowly from one blended shade to another.

"Lights run by a little water-motor," the consul explained; "which shows that they were on to the fountain game a mighty long time ago."

"But what on earth is all this?" Charlotte asked, leaning across the arm of his chair, and looking up at him. "How did you find out about it? Tell us all about it, won't you?"

The consul laughed at her impatience, and stroked her hair before he answered.

"Well, I don't know much about it, and I reckon no one else does — or if they do, they won't tell. You see, it was this way. The kaid accidentally told an old feller, who is some kind of a grand mucky-muck chamberlain around the Sultan's palace, that his sister was livin' with us, and this old chap, bein' curious and as ignorant as everything else in Fez, wanted to know where the American consulate was. The kaid says, when he told the old feller, he gave him a funny look, and asked him if he ever came here. 'Of course,' the kaid says; 'every day. You don't suppose I'd let a day go by without seein' my sister.' 'Why?' asks the mucky-muck. 'Because I love her,' truthfully answers the kaid. 'What for?' says the old chap; 'I've got between four and seven hundred sisters, and I don't love 'em. Most of 'em I ain't never seen, nor don't want to.'"

"But, dad, what under the sun has all this to do with the house?" his daughter interrupted.

"I'm tellin' you, girl, just as fast as I can," the Honorable Bob expostulated. "I'm givin' it to you the way I remember it. Well, Kaid Hamilton, bein' of an investigatin' turn, led this chamberlain man on, but couldn't find out for a while what made him act so queer. Finally, the old man leans over, and whispers. 'The place has two gardens,' says he, 'one of which can't be seen from anywhere, and which for many years no man has entered.' 'Why?' says Kaid Hamilton, still bein' curious. 'Under a cuss,' says the old feller. By-and-bye, by leadin' him along, Hamilton finds out that the garden is just back of the big one where we all thought there was nothin' but a high wall, and that once there was a door in the wall. That's all he could find out. A few nights after, him and me was walkin' out here while you girls were loafin' round inside, and he remembers this, and tells it to me as an interestin' story."

"But didn't tell us," protested Margaret.

"No, he ain't exactly of the communicatin' kind," the consul drawled. "However, I kept thinkin' about it, and the next day began investigatin' on my own hook and when I was all alone. I'd about given it up, when I came to that tree of ivy, which had grown up before the stone door, and I found it. Of course, there wasn't no key, and I had to get a locksmith to make one, and then my troubles began. That's why the old man we had workin' in the garden quit: because he wouldn't go inside after I'd got the gate open, and I took his resignation right quick. I tried to get in others, and finally did get a bunch that didn't seem to know nothin' about

the cuss. That was more than six weeks ago. I had an army of 'em in here, so's I could give you girls a surprise, when I got everything fixed up. It's goin' to be your garden, where you can be your own bosses, and have things any way you want to. That's all I know about it."

He dismissed the whole affair without further remark, but the three sitting beside him and watching the huge fountain shimmer and glow, realized the work and money that had been expended to give a little more happiness to the girl by his side, and they understood, too, the homely simplicity of his character, which had led him to keep it a profound secret, that he might have the pleasure of surprising her. Charlotte slipped gently up to the arm of his chair, put her arm round his neck, and kissed him, and he patted her back clumsily.

"But this garden must have been a tangle," Margaret commented.

"Yes, a regular forest. That's what made it take so long. Had to have things cut out and trimmed, and lawns planted and new lanterns put in, and — oh, a heap of things attended to."

"What about the curse, though?" the officer asked. "Haven't you found out what it is?"

"No; didn't bother none about that," the consul answered. "They're too cheap in this country to worry over, or ask questions about. Morocco's made up of just three things: lies, dirt and cusses — none of which a good American cares a damn about."

Through the shrubbery came the stately-moving figure of a house Arab, clad all in white and appearing

ghost-like as he approached the front of the verandah. He made a dignified bow, and tendered a card, which the consul took, held higher to get a stronger light for its reading, and then straightened up with a growl.

"It's that man, Buhammei," he said. "Come to pay his respects, and hopes the ladies were not unduly fatigued by their day's excursion. What shall I tell him?"

The girls looked at each other and at Dick, whose face, turned toward the fountain, was as calm as though graven.

"I suppose we shall have to invite him in, sha'n't we, Margy?" the consul's daughter asked of her friend.

Margaret appeared troubled for a moment, but gave a slow, "Yes." The Honorable Bob muttered something that sounded like an objurgation, and then spoke to the waiting Arab.

"Bring Mr. Buhammei out here," he said; and then, as the man bowed and walked away, he concluded: "I'm not goin' to have my evenin' in the garden spoiled by goin' into the house. He can see us here just as well as not, and I hope it'll be the first and the last time — I don't like him!"

He sat frowning at the nearest column, and a silence fell on the group. Dick Whitney turned his head, and watched the pathway along which the visitor must come, and thought he observed a lithe white figure halt in the doorway of the garden, and stand for several moments before entering. It came slowly on under the dim light thrown from the lantern, and proved to be Buhammei, clad in a linen suit of snowy whiteness. He was looking

to the right and left, and carrying his hat in his hand. He paused beside a column, and stared up at it, then came onward to where the light of the fountain illumined his features. It seemed to the officer that Buhammei's eyes were frowning fiercely at everything about him, and taking inventory of all that he saw. He threw off this somberness, however, when he caught sight of the group on the verandah, and walked less deliberately until he stood on the lowest step, gazing up at them. In a quiet voice, he spoke to each in turn with a graceful compliment, then seated himself on the topmost step, leaning his back against a pillar, and for a moment or two was quite thoughtful.

"I did not know you used a second garden," he said, looking up at the consul, who sat almost behind him.

"We didn't until I discovered it, and had it opened and fixed up," the Westerner replied, with scant cordiality.

"Ah! You discovered it?"

"Wouldn't you like to come inside the house?" Charlotte asked. "Father has left it just as it was. It's very picturesque."

With something approaching haste, Buhammei declined, giving as he did so a peculiar twitch with his shoulders, and extending his hand in the odd gesture that Whitney had so frequently noticed.

"No," he said, after an interval; "I don't believe I should dare!"

Everyone save the consul looked at him questioningly; but his face, although quite strongly lighted from the reflection of the fountain, was impassive.

"It is, indeed, singular," he went on, "that an American should discover and rehabilitate a garden of whose existence I suppose at most not more than a hundred living people are aware, possibly not more than ten. There was a time when it was forbidden to even mention it, and to have done so in some places would have cost one's life. Its gate once bore the Sultan's seal, to break which would be cause for death. It was called the Garden of Fate."

He stopped abruptly, looking over his shoulder into the darkened room, then back at the fountain, as if he had said all there was to say; but his hearers, intensely interested and each leaning forward, hoped that he would resume.

"Well, for goodness' sake, Mr. Buhammei, don't keep us waiting, if you know the story," Charlotte called.

He shook his head slowly.

"I don't believe I can tell it to you," he said.

But the girl insisted, and even Margaret Clarke evinced an unusual curiosity. He laughed, and again was about to refuse, when the Honorable Bob added the weight of his voice.

"Go on," he said. "I haven't heard anything about it, and ain't likely to, if there's no more than ten men who know the story. We're rather anxious because we've got this lay-out on our hands for two years more. It'll be good to know what we're up against."

Buhammei, smiling, leaned back, and glanced from one face to another.

"Is it a ghost story?" Charlotte asked, stooping down toward him.

"Y-e-s," was the answer, uttered very slowly ; "yet, not exactly — rather, a story of the dead." His voice had dropped as if the superstitions of the East were commanding him to silence.

"Then, we'll have the lights out," the girl retorted merrily, and clapped her hands. Buhammei did not look toward her.

The Arab servant appeared, and, following her instructions, extinguished all the lights in the verandah. The stars that glittered overhead, low hung in the tropical night, and the weird, shifting lights that came through the sheets of leaping water were enough. Buhammei sat for several minutes as if sorry that he had said anything, and greatly reluctant to tell the story of the Garden of Fate. When he began, it was in a voice so low that it sounded as if it came from the weary throat of some aged story-teller of the bazaars.

CHAPTER SEVEN

“**I** SUPPOSE you wonder,” the Moor began, “how I know all this, having lived away from Morocco so long; but I shall assure you before I start that once it was well known, although now it has become a legend.” He stopped for a moment, and, when he resumed, spoke with something of tenderness. “It was told to me by one who has gone to the bosom of the Prophet these many, many years. It is a story that one does not forget easily, because it is of primitive passions, absorbing hates and sorrowful tragedies; of nights when the moon shone into this Garden of Fate, when slaves came and went at a strong man’s command, and Love whispered in as liquid tones as the waters that are gurgling out there before us. Love, hatred, death and — Kismet!”

He turned, and gave a sweeping glance at the group behind him, seeming to observe them all, from the erect American officer and the English girl who sat near him, with her dark head resting against the back of the chair, to the fair-haired American girl who was leaning elbow and chin on the arm of the seat in which the sturdy old consul, white haired and immovable, sprawled in luxurious repose. His look passed beyond them to the black depths of the doorway, and then back out to the still trees, the brooding night, and the folds of silvered

water that fell ceaselessly into the stone basin beneath, and sounded a faint accompaniment to his voice.

“A sand-diviner once stopped the caravan of the present Sultan’s father, as it was coming from Mequinez to Fez, and the then Sultan, being tired, listened to the man’s talk. It is said that the man was a worthy seer, and gave His Majesty sage advice, which protected him to the time when he forgot. But, in that divination, the seer repeatedly saw, as the sands shifted and curled before him, a garden, in which was to be twice decided the fate of the nation itself. He reiterated the phrase, ‘The Garden of Fate! The Garden of Fate!’ but, before he could see further into the future, he was overcome by the finger of Allah, and fell dead upon his heaps of sand.

“The Sultan’s eldest son, the elder brother of Muley-Mohammed, named El Hasan, was a man of remarkable promise, and a much loved prince. In his youth, he became the idol of the warlike Berbers, by living with them for some years, and won the fealty of even the untamed and unconquered tribes of the Rif. He was a man broad minded and just, who strove to learn all that might be of value to him when he should come to the throne, an event for which many tribes were eagerly waiting. He was venturesome, and once made a trip through Europe alone, traveling incognito and studying European habits. Either because he imbibed some of the European ideas, or because he was a man of peculiar singleness of affection, he had not, up to the age of thirty, taken to himself a wife. He was said to have been a handsome man, and skilled in horseman-

ship and sports; indeed, fitted in all ways to become Commander of the Faithful, and strong where others of the Fileli had been weak.

"In Tafilat, whence come the Fileli, far beyond the passes of the Atlas Mountains, and where Europeans are unknown, dwelt a venerable sheik, Abu-Ben-Kasan, afterward kaid of his province, and a most devout man. The prince, El Hasan, journeying thither, was the guest of the sheik, and to his ears came whispers of the wonderful beauty of the sheik's daughter, said to have been of all her tribe the most fair and gracious-minded. None may tell how first they met, of the course of his wooing, or whether they met at all, until the time she was carried to the door of his tent; but the road of love, although never the same, brought the prince and the Berber maid together, and those who knew swore that never lived a happier man and wife.

"They passed the early months of their married life in Mechinez, but the old Sultan, wishing for the presence of his favorite son, insisted on his coming to Fez. Even then, El Hasan would permit none to disturb his joy, and so, although a nominal resident of the great palace on the bank of the Pearl, he bought this modest place, and fitted it as suited his taste. He spared neither trouble nor expense to make happy the girl who had known the freedom of the hills, the open sweep of the winds and the shade of boundless trees. He feared that she would pine away in the walls to which the women of Fez were accustomed, that she would not be contented to see the morning shadows and the night's blue from the roof of a terrace as do other women,

and so, at an immense cost, he bought the buildings which covered the land of his garden. He bought those around it, and razed the whole, that none might profane this seclusion with their eyes. They tore away old walls and foundations, until not a stone remained. Hundreds of men worked at the bidding of El Hasan, as if he were Aladdin, who had but to rub the lamp to have his will. They built the great windowless wall you see inclosing this space, and shut off all view from the outside. Strings of camels grunted beneath loaded paniers of fertile soil, with which he enriched this spot. Gardeners from the Sultan's palace held their heads together, and schemed for its beautification, and the most renowned sculptors of Italy across the Mediterranean sent marble fountains and graceful fabrications for its adornment. The waters from springs high on the hills above were piped down to this retreat, that the bride of El Hasan might drink, and lave in, nothing but the sweetest and coolest.

"A year went by, and the great trees, which had been removed whole and reset by man's hands, flung down cool shade, the flowers bloomed in masses, and the daughter of the sheik brought joy to the stern El Hasan by giving him a man-child, thus assuring his line of the Fileli to the throne for at least one generation more. It is known that his joy was beyond bounds, for the birth was announced in Fez and throughout the land of the faithful, and the Sultan made it a national celebration. It is yet told how, on that day, Berber chiefs, who had never bowed in heart to any living thing, came in caravans, and camped within the squares

of Fez, to pay congratulations to El Hasan whom they loved, and to have held up before them the tiny babe which would one day be the Kalifa of the Prophet, the Sword of Allah. They brought rich treasures from the far hills, and jewels which had known the crown of Bagdad; and El Hasan, trembling with happiness, poured them into the lap of the Berber maid.

“His anxiety for her redoubled itself, until it became the theme of his life. Nothing was good enough for the mother of his child — snows from the Atlas to cool her drinks, the pick of the dates from Tafilat for her trays, sweets from across the seas, and all that might be obtained by a man who had a thousand slaves to do his will. It was in that time that the house where we sit was built, and rare artificers wrought upon its most minute detail. Again, the warlike Berbers sent donations for its decoration, and beautiful shining arms to be used by the son of El Hasan when he became of age. It is said that this little house contained some of the most priceless weapons that the Berber had ever known, famous blades that had been handed down through generations, lances that had been couched on many brave and hard-fought fields, and shields that had been taken from the dead hands of conquered kings.

“No one knows who whispered into the crafty old Sultan’s ear that it was ill for a man to have but one wife, and that it would be more befitting his son, who would come to the gate of justice when Allah called his father home, to respect the faith by taking at least one more. There is nothing to show that anything save a duty he could not avoid induced El Hasan to

receive the wife the Sultan sent. It is told that when the gorgeous procession came down the street, leading the Sultan's most beautiful horse, which carried in a closed canopy of ivory and gold the second wife, the prince received her with a surly face, and betrayed loathing or indifference in his attitude. And it was whispered among the quiet slaves of the palace that he never so much as took her to his arms; but turned her over to her waiting women, motioned her away, and then stalked slowly through the garden, through the doors of this secluded spot and to the embraces of the Berber girl or the caresses of his chubby son.

"So open was his indifference that it leaked past the latticed windows, filtered down from the galleries, cried from the terraced roofs, sped on the wings of the wind, and won back the love of the wild Berbers, who had faltered in their affection for him when it became known that he had taken to wife another beside the daughter of their sheik. Once more, they shook their heads, and called him the hope of the faithful, although not speaking of the other woman openly, for such is against the Mussulman's creed.

"Who may read the souls of men, or the ways of Allah? Who can tell why the change was permitted to come — here in the Garden of Fate? But it came. I cannot say why, for I am only giving you the legend as told to me, with all its detail, its awfulness, its alternate horror!"

Buhammei paused for a moment, and moved restlessly, stared at the fountain, then gave a quick, lowering sweep of his eyes toward the room behind, the dimly

outlined gray walls that shone high above the garden; and the motionless trees that seemed listening to his recountal of the scenes which they had witnessed.

"Who may know what El Hasan, mighty, strong, courageous and young, favored with all that is good in life, clean and unsuspecting, felt when he came into this garden one morning, clad all in white, for he was a simple man, and, as he walked down the graveled path past the masses of flowers, saw something that made him pause? An African gardener, who had been trimming the shrubs, watched from the corner of his eye while pretending to continue his labor. The birds above must have stopped singing, and everything stood shudderingly still. The African said, long after, that El Hasan's face was something fearful to look upon; that it became distorted as if in a spasm, and that he stood still, looking meanwhile at the walls about the Garden of Fate, and then back at the half-clasp of a man's burnous, which lay in his open palm. Finally, with a gesture of disgust, the prince threw the piece of gold far off into the depths of a thicket, his face cleared, and he went on into the little house where a voice was heard singing little lilting songs to a baby, that crooned in the delight of life.

"The gardener said that the prince's visit was brief on that morning, and that, when he went out, he stopped at the portals in the middle wall, and said in his quiet, incisive way that, if ever he learned of the gate from the inner garden being left unwarded by the slaves who attended it, he would with his own hands cut off their lives. The slaves trembled, and swore that it had

never been, nor ever would be, unwatched, and vowed constant faithfulness to their charge; but El Hasan, still frowning and thoughtful, had gone before they finished.

“For a time, the affairs of the house went on as before, the prince never seeing the bride who had been given him by the Sultan, the slaves watching, the moon shining, the wind stirring the trees and flowers, and the voice of the Berber mother singing throughout the day from an overflowing heart, and listening for the creaking hinges which always told her in advance that the man she loved, the father of her boy, was coming to his own. Days when the prince lounged in this secluded spot, and read from books in the many tongues he knew, and played with the child whose words were beginning to come, or nights when he lay here on the verandah with his head pillowed on cushions, and listened to the girlish voice in the wild songs of the free desert, which she had known, accompanied by the gentle tones of the zikarrah and the whispered song of the fountain; nights when the birds, which knew her, twittered sleepily from the boughs of the trees, and the fireflies whirled through the air while they two talked, and the boy, inside this oasis in the heart of a city, slept as babies sleep.

“There came another morning, when the African saw the prince stop as he walked beside a farther wall, and pick up a glove — a man’s glove, such as is worn by officers of the Black Guard. This time, he did not throw it away, but clutched it furiously, looked up at the wall above, at the tiny cottage where the woman

was still asleep, and thrust it within the folds of his burnous. Nor did he pass between the marble columns, but, instead, walked with drooping head and nervous steps out past the fountain, beyond the Italian statues and through the guarded door, saying nothing—even to himself—for the Fileli, when wounded in heart, are slow to speech, and stealthy.

“He did not return for a whole day, and then another; and the voice in the nest was first melancholy, and then stilled. When he did come, it was as a thirsty man rushing to the desert spring, and no longer able to forbear or bridle his thirst. She gave a cry, and met him at the door. He took her tightly in his arms for a time, then held her off, and looked deep into her eyes. He felt the gardener’s stare, turned his head quickly round, and the man dared look no more.

“On the next day, coming early, the prince picked a scrap of twisted paper from a clump of lawn, and was no longer El Hasan the just. They say that his manner changed; that he grew moody and irritable; that he came no less frequently to the garden, but that, when here, he walked to and fro like a man who is



weighing all things, and that he once thrust aside the mother of his babe, who, heedless of the African, crept up to him, and put her arms round his neck, looked up into his face, and whispered something, while he stood with unreceptive arms. Sometimes, he came furtively in the night, creeping stealthily forward in the shadows of the trees, and standing for hours in the heart of some miniature wilderness, watching, watching for something that would further rend his heart; but nothing came.

“Now, in all this time, there had been but one person of the household, other than the workmen, admitted to the little paradise. She was a fierce and gnarled crone, who had been nurse to the Berber girl, and, when given her freedom, had clung to her as to a daughter. When El Hasan took to his couch the descendant of the Berber sheiks, this freed woman had remained with the girl, to whom she was half-mother and wholly slave. A wild, untamed creature she was, who bowed neither head nor knee to El Hasan, and haughtily held her way, being tolerated to the extent that at all times she had entrance to her mistress, and to the most sequestered portions of the palace. When the first break came in the harmony of these two lives, she had been the comforter of the princess, but, too, had become a person of mystery, passing out into the night, slipping here and there with noiseless feet, and terrifying the others of the house by her unexpected appearances; but she said nothing to the girl — or so it is believed — and only tried to unravel the mystery. She alone saw the end, and took a part.

"She was awakened by a noise without, one morning when the dawn was just breaking and before the sleepers of the city had aroused. Creeping from her rug, to avoid disturbing the harassed and mourning girl who had dropped to sleep with the child in her arms, she slipped out among the trees beside the fountain that was aimlessly glittering in continual song. She stared through the foliage, and saw El Hasan coming in. His face was lined as by tortures. He was clad in festal raiment, which he must have donned the night before, wearing a burnous of silk with broad black and yellow stripes, held by great diamond clasps, his legs encased in flowing folds, the golden embroidery of which sagged heavily, and his feet shod in flexible boots, with ornamentations of precious gems enough to ransom a province. His hands were clenched, his lips compressed, and his eyes roved like birds driven before a furious wind.

"He paused, as if uncertain whether to enter the sanctuary he had built for the woman of his heart, or to seek further along the paths. Then, looking upward, he gave a start, and stared at the further wall for a long, long time, as though wondering at some unanticipated thing. Quite slowly, like a man in dread, he whirled on his heels, took one more look at the little house, with the insensate white columns, and then retraced his steps to the door leading into the private garden.

"Frightened by his actions, the Berber crone held her *yashmak* across her face with trembling hands, and peered out after him. He walked to and fro inside

the door, and presently a slave brought a long, light ladder, which he would have carried within, but El Hasan forbade. He gestured to the man to lay it beside the wall, and bade the slave shut the door and remain without. The prince stopped for a few minutes beside the ladder with his arms at rest, then picked it up. He was a man of great strength, and came balancing the ladder on his shoulder through the broad paths, looking neither to the right nor to the left, but with his eyes fixed blankly ahead, like a man who is walking to his doom. He went to the far end, and planted the ladder against the wall, raising it slowly and determinedly, and then testing it to see if its base were secure. He gave a swirl to his brilliant burnous until it was wrapped around his shoulders leaving his legs free, then mounted to the very top of the high wall, where he paused for an instant, staring intently before him. Presently, he reached out, whipped a poniard from his girdle, slashed at something, and descended with it in his hands. He stopped when his feet touched the ground, and turned the thing over and over, now looking above, now at the marble house behind the fountain, now at the cold, unfeeling skies. That which he held was a weather-beaten rope ladder, neatly rolled, which had rested flat on the top of the wall.

“He threw it down, and turned fiercely toward the paths again, his heels striking the gravel, his face fiercely despairing. He half-walked, half-ran to the gate, his garments fluttering out behind on the course of his flight. He battered on the closed door with

both fists, and ordered the slaves to bring his other wife without delay. Affrighted at his manner, they returned almost instantly with the bride who had never been recognized. He waved the slaves back, and, when the door was shut, seized the cowering woman by the wrist, and, half-dragging her, ran rather than walked the length of the path, past the fountain and into the recesses of the secluded house. The woman's wrappings, which had whipped behind her in the course of the journey, fell droopingly back to her sides, and she stood with hands folded before, waiting.

"Aroused by the noise of their entrance, the Berber girl, who had sobbed herself to sleep, leaped from her couch, and came out to the entrance, her eyes wide and wild, her hands clutched across her breast, her lips parted. The boy toddled after her, clung to her skirts, and then, in the tense moment of waiting, hesitated, rubbed his little fists to his eyes, and with the babble of babyhood lurched out, moving sleepily, step by step, down the marble way to the walk and out to the fountain's basin, where he paddled his tiny hands, and cooed to the disturbed minnows below.

"The mother looked first at her husband, who glared at her, and then at the other woman, who had recovered her self-assurance, and was now intently watching everything with an assumption of languor.

"'Go!' he said to the woman he had loved. He thrust his second wife forward, where she dropped to the cushions in the center of the room, and there with henna-tinted finger-tips plucked at the hem of her

embroidered wrappings. The Berber girl looked from one to the other, and then, with a meaning gasp, clutched both hands together, and held them out toward him, stepping slowly forward. He thrust her from him so violently that she whirled, slipped and fell on the polished pavement. She raised herself to her knees with her chin uplifted, her hands still clasped, and looked wildly into his eyes. He stood with folded arms, and frowned down upon her. She groveled, crept and crawled forward, clasping his ankles with her arms, and begging him to tell her what she had done, pleading for some word of love, sobbing her distress to the tortured hollowness of his heart. But he stood unmoved for what seemed an age, while the bride who had never been in his arms sat on the cushions, and smiled at the piteous figure on the squares of tile.

“He unfolded his arms, and with unleashed tongue coldly accused her of unfaithfulness, telling her of what he had found hitherto and of his latest discovery, his hand sweeping in a gesture toward the wall, where the ladder still rested with the bundle of twisted rope at its foot. As he spoke, she lifted herself, this daughter of many sheiks, until she was on her knees. She stood upon her feet, facing him with eyes of indignation and helplessness, hearing charge after charge of which she knew nothing and for which, in her innocence, she could offer no defense. The house of dreams, the carded world of happiness and love, was crumbling into ruins beneath her bared feet, and the one who had been tender and kind was the insane figure

that stood before her, mad with jealousy, hatred and accusation. Yet, being of the Fileli, he was now cold and determined.

“Poor girl! The light was fading out. She quivered as if scourged by cruel lashes. She attempted to deny, but he silenced her with a motion so fierce that it was worse than a blow.

“‘You may go,’ El Hasan said, quite coldly. ‘You may live beneath the roof, because you are not worth killing. You are a thing degraded, and spared only because I hate to destroy the shell of what was; but, from this day, never let me see you, hear of you, or know that you are alive. You are as one disgraced, dead and forgotten!’

“She gave another appealing look at him, but he had turned away, and was standing before the grinning woman on the cushions, who pretended humility and surrender. The rejected wife tottered down the white steps and out toward the baby boy, who, now wide-awake, laughingly splashed the water with his hands. El Hasan turned, and saw the mother approach her child.

“‘No more!’ he thundered. ‘Never again are you to touch the child, or see him. Leave him alone. Get you out to your quarters!’

“She paused for an instant, as if stupefied by this last command, then, with both hands crossed above her breast, faced him, an unfathomable despair in her look. She took a step forward, paused, and then staggered blindly up these steps and knelt before him. She strug-

gled to speak, as if the voices of her throat had become halting and dumb.

“‘Not that!’ she said. ‘Not that!’

“‘Yes, that!’

“He was cold and impassive, but he had turned his back to the other woman, who peered round the obscuring folds of his burnous to look at the stricken girl.

“The blood and heritage of chiefs may not flow unanswered in any veins. It responds to vital calls. It sweeps madly when aroused, and disregards the curb of sex. The Berber woman ran past him into the inner recesses of the house, while he, thinking she had gone for some article of apparel, waited, and the other wife watched. She came back, and stood before him with a drawn, white, agonized face. There was a swirl of her garments, and she dropped at his feet. She rolled writhingly over, down one step, down another, and then sluggishly to the bottom stair, where she lay face downward and still. El Hasan stood above her with folded arms, and without movement waited for her to arise. A bird awoke, and gave a shrill series of chirruping sounds. The boy still dabbled in the fountain, slapping the water with his open hands. El Hasan’s arms unfolded, his hands came half-way to his sides, where they stopped with distended fingers, and he leaned forward. The whiteness of the step on which she lay was sullied with a slow-moving, erratic line of red.

“He forgot what he believed to be his wrongs, and remembered only that the crumpled heap at the foot of the temple of love, which he had erected for her and

wherein he had been happy, was the girl from the tents, the girl whose songs had lulled him in happy nights, whose caresses had given him the most exquisite peace he had ever known, who had become the mother of the boy at the fountain's brim. He forgot his suspicions, he forgot the woman behind, he forgot everything! He ran down and picked the listlessly twitching form up into his arms, seeing as he did so that her errand to the inner room had been a desperate ruse to gain a jeweled poniard with which to make her farewell. He called on her to speak, to forgive, and was heedless of all around.

"From the bushes to the right of the fountain, something crept forward, slid past them into the room, and crouched above the woman on the cushions. The woman looked up when the shadow interposed, and read that it was the shadow of Kismet, the loom of death. She did not scream, not even when the Berber crone's knife found her life, but rolled softly over to the little blue-squared tile, doubled and undoubled, and



gasped. El Hasan did not seem to notice. He was still calling in vain to the other dying lips.

"No one quite understands how she did it — the old Berber servant woman. Sometimes, I doubt if she knew herself. But now, she ran back to the dripping water, caught the boy into her arms, ran down the path, caught the ropes, scaled the lad-



der, and slid down outside! To go where? No one ever found out!

"They came into the garden when the sun was high — the garden that was laughing with light, the bubble of waters and songs of birds — to find the prince, El Hasan the

strong, walking backward and forward along graveled paths, his bedraggled burnous trailing on the ground, his arms clasped round the dead body that held his heart, and singing in the voice of insanity a love-song of the deserts, which they two had known, while, distorted and still, the body of another woman rested in this refuge of love and tragedy. They were not to learn until later that the daughter of the sheiks was innocent; that a brother of the woman who was neglected had contrived the evil plot to besmirch a reputation, and to gain a hold over the man who was destined for the throne; that the Berber nurse, wild and savage, had gone from all human knowledge with * the tiny prince, and, as far as could be learned, had cast herself and her charge into the waters of the Pearl, to end the miserable tragedy and to carry the baby in her dripping dead arms to the mother in Allah's far beyond. So, this place, the Garden of Fate, after its brief history of tender love, black jealousies and mad tragedies, was sealed with the Sultan's seal, leaving time to wash away the stains that marked where a girl had died."

The Moor's hand stretched out in a trembling gesture, and swept over the step at his feet.

... .. the baby (?)

CHAPTER EIGHT

FOR an instant, all remained quiet in the positions they had assumed. The consul's daughter had both hands clutched round her father's arms, and he was leaning far forward with his eyes fixed on the bottom step, as if picturing the form of the young Berber mother. Margaret Clarke sat very straight and still, and the American officer had bent over with one knee thrust out and the other back by the edge of his chair, and his closed fists resting on the tops of his thighs. Even in the dim light, the workings of Buhammei's face were distinct as he peered at the step, from which, as he said, time had washed the stains. His voice had been full of emotion when he came to his climax, but now, after a long, shivering breath, he leaned back against the marble column, and resumed his speech in a voice quiet and controlled.

"I leave it to you, whether it has been in reality the Garden of Fate—the garden seen by the sand-diviner in his trance. It would seem so. Prince El Hasan was led babbling away. They relieved him of his burden with great difficulty, because in his madness he thought she slept, and, when they approached, he cautioned them not to disturb her. He had apparently forgotten the second wife; but he could never be reconciled to the absence of his boy. By a great mercy, he did not last long, and those who were by him when

he went said he was whispering phrases of love to one they could not see."

The Moor stopped, and looked past the fountain to the silhouette of the far wall, over which the Berber woman had fled with a baby in her arms, and appeared to recall the conclusion of his story.

"It was a tragedy for all participants. In an accidental way, the part the second wife's brother had played came to light, and it was found that he had conceived the idea of poisoning El Hasan's mind against his favorite wife by slow degrees. He had taken advantage of a spot behind the wall where none might see or interrupt him, and visited it at times with a ladder. The rope ladder permitted him to come down from the top, and to enter the garden. First, he dropped the clasp; next, the gloves. Finding that these two had failed, he wrote a letter apparently making a rendezvous, so worded as to incriminate her, and he deliberately left the coiled ladder on top of the wall, where it might attract speedy attention."

"And what became of him — what did they do to him?" the consul asked.

"They turned him over to the Berbers, who demanded him," the Moor replied. "The Berbers took him out into the edge of the desert, and buried him up to his neck in the sand, after blinding him, and doubtless before he died he had time for repentance."

"Good God!" the consul half-whispered.

"It was a fateful affair for the nation," the Moor went on, as if the man's punishment had been nothing so terribly unusual, really worth small consideration.

"You see, by the loss of a strong man well fitted for rulership, the throne fell to a younger brother, who was far less capable—the present Sultan. For him, the Berbers had no love, nor much fealty. They dropped back to the condition in which they had previously been for many generations, rebellious, free warriors, fighting for, or against, the Sultan as the humor dictated. They were even robbed of the joy of seeing the grandson of Abu-Ben-Kasan on the throne. To this descendant of one of their most venerable sheiks, they would probably have given unswerving loyalty and support. There are many of those in the Rif who have never been convinced that the present Sultan did not participate in the plot. For these reasons, it seems possible that this garden was the one foreseen, on which the fate of the nation was to hang, because Morocco was then disrupted, and has gone steadily downward since that time."

Another spell of that curious listlessness which he had shown on the top of Mount Zalag settled over Buhammei, and he looked blankly out into the shadows. No one appeared to be in talking humor, and for several minutes nothing was said. The consul slipped one arm over his daughter's shoulders, and settled back into his chair; Margaret drew a deep breath, and was quiet, while the officer, still erect and thoughtful, continued to contemplate the Moor as if striving to read whether in this man were the taints of wildness and fierceness that marked his countrymen. Now, more than ever, he felt his slowly forming estimate of the country and its people crystallizing into fixed judgments. All the

languid life, the grace of soft, slow motion, the dreamy air, the very kindness of the skies, were masks worn to conceal, cruel, unrestrained passions, which were ready to break out on the slightest pretext, and to become murderous, as he had personally beheld. The officer had seen enough of Buhammei to become convinced that the man, although usually contained and polished, held smoldering fires. In what he had that day said of ancient glories, and in his telling the story of the garden, was proof that imagination was one of his strong characteristics, for he had undoubtedly felt in a great measure the tragedy of El Hasan. The Moor could not have acted it more earnestly. His habits proved him a Mussulman in truth and a devout follower of the faith. His flash of anger when the Berber had met him on the road betrayed a temper that was not entirely governed. There was in him, the officer thought, a summing up of the Moorish people, externally calm until something sparked the explosives within them; quick in temper, impulsive in action, rioting in imagination, and with a profound belief in a religion promising a material hereafter. Thus was caused a fanaticism such as no other race in the world could comprehend or subdue. The man sitting at the foot of the column, with a face rendered the color of bronze by the combined light of fountain and star, appeared a statue; yet, the American knew that there were great tensivity and passion; and he had a prescience that some day these qualities would be unloosed — here in the land from which his ancestors had come, the land that for

some reason had sent its voice out to the boulevards of Paris, and called him home.

Dick Whitney's thoughts were interrupted by the sound of steps approaching determinedly over the gravel, and in the shadow of the lanterns they saw one of the servants conducting the kaid. The latter called out, "Ah — there you are!" and started to add something more; but he checked himself as the white figure at the foot of the porch arose.

"Good-evening, Mr. Buhammei," the Englishman said, without proffering his hand. The Moor, with equal reserve, answered and bowed deeply. Dick had an instant anxious sense of some enmity on the part of each toward the other as on the previous meetings of the two, and wondered whether or not the girls had divined its existence. If so, they did not show the fact as they greeted the kaid; nor did they display any emotion when the Moor reached for his hat, and announced that he had overstayed his time, and must go. The consul's daughter alone urged him to stay longer, and, at last, when he remained firm, gathered her skirts daintily in one hand, and conducted him to the gate leading out of the garden. Her laughter came back, and Whitney sustained a feeling of annoyance. Yet, even in that moment, he found time to look curiously at Kaid Clarke, who had whirled round, stepped down to the middle of the steps, and now watched the two white figures retreating. The fountains' reflection showed that the officer's brows were drawn a trifle, but aside from this he appeared unmoved. Watching him,

the American had a vagrant introspection, and asked himself whether he should not be jealous. He looked at the English girl by his side, and, for the first time since he had arrived in Fez, he felt himself flush, and was ashamed. He knew without reasoning, as he glanced at the slender white profile of her throat, the determined curve of her chin and her cleanly-arched brow, that if Margaret Clarke had walked to the gate with Buhammei, he would not have accepted the situation so calmly. He accused himself of recalcitrance as he watched Charlotte come skipping back up the lighted lane in front of the little house. She stopped directly in front of the kaid, shaking a finger up at him in girlish accusation.

"You weren't here to dinner," she said. "You didn't come in time to join father's surprise party, and, more than all, are paid for it by losing something."

"How?" the general asked, his face appearing a little less set.

"You didn't hear Mr. Buhammei's history of this place."

"No."

"Don't you wish to hear it?"

"No."

"Why?"

"I've heard it."

Charlotte took a long breath, and sat down in her chair with a gesture of hopelessness. The kaid took another seat, and was still.

"Well, in the name of all that's sane," she asked, "why didn't you tell it?"

"Spoil your father's surprise."

"But, Hamilton, why didn't you tell me?" the consul interjected.

"What was the use of destroying your pleasure?" Clarke retorted. "I never would have told you. Does a murderous yarn add to one's pleasure of possession?"

"No," the Honorable Bob answered slowly, "it doesn't; but, on the other hand, it can't keep me from enjoyin' the place and from always feelin' a little sorry for the poor young mother who was driven to use the steel here on these stairs. More'n that, it makes me feel there must be somethin' bigger and better in these people than I'd thought — that under their lies, and deceits, and robberies, they know how to sometimes love each other so that without love they're ready to go to another world. And that ain't no defense for any of it, either," he added, turning in his chair, "not even for the sheik's daughter; but just shows that they're spoiled children, after all."

Kaid Clarke muttered something, and checked himself. Yet, the uncompleted sentence sounded to the American officer who was near him like, "Spoiled children be — " The Englishman pulled a cigar from his pocket, and lighted it with his steady hands. Then, between puffs he said to the consul:

"His Majesty, the Sultan, Muley-Mohammed, listened to me today, and tomorrow will send you due and ceremonious notice that you are granted a private audience, to discuss the unfortunate arrests of naturalized Americans which have been made, with a view to remedying future affairs."

The Honorable Bob sat up with a jerk.

"No!" he said. "No! You don't mean it! Why, I've been tryin' to get a crack at him alone ever since I first came here. He's givin' in, is he? He's be-ginnin' to understand that Uncle Sam isn't to be monkeyed with!"

He slapped his leg with a vigorous hand, and had the air of one who is winning through the force of his backing. But Kaid Clarke, remembering how reluctant had been the Sultan's consent to the interview, only smiled out into the night, took a few puffs at his cigar, and all of a sudden his eyes looked old and worn. Whitney, watching, decided that the general was harassed by many things of which none other knew. He was to be convinced of this a moment later. The consul, as if tired of inaction, and elated by what he considered a victory, clambered to his feet, and turned to his daughter and Margaret.

"Come on, girls," he said. "We'll take a little *pascar*. I'm tired of hearin' about things that aren't pleasant, and am goin' down here to look at the place in the wall where the old woman ran away with the baby boy."

"But that is not changing the subject," the English girl suggested.

"And, moreover, we don't want it changed," added Charlotte, reverting to the story. "Seriously, I shall never stop mourning for the Berber girl, for the little fellow who played in the fountain, and for the prince who had come to the end of all things."

Her voice had become sad and serious, yet she was

eager to traverse the road over which the tragedy had passed to its end. The Honorable Bob's face sobered again. Margaret Clarke arose, and the three walked together down the steps, and turned away toward the shadows of the wall. Dick Whitney had been sitting quietly, and the kaid was as moveless as ever, the alternating dulness and glare of his cigar telling that he was puffing steadily. The others had no sooner left than he turned his head toward his companion, who, seizing this opportunity of telling of the day's tragedy, dragged his chair forward.

"Well," the kaid interrogated, "I suppose you are wondering if I know anything about that little affair which Sidi Suleyman had on the mountain top today? Before I answer anything concerning that, I should like to ask you what you think of this chap, Buhammei."

"But the killing appears to be more serious."

Clarke was silent for a while. To the American, he seemed to be studying some abstruse problem.

"Suppose," he said, looking up, "that you begin by telling me of your excursion. Kind of a whole-truth-and-all-the-truth recital."

With painstaking care, Dick went into every detail of the day's trip, recounting all that he had seen or heard, and considerable of what he had thought in the tense times while he was on the mountainside. The kaid evinced no special interest until that portion relating to the man in the road was told; then, like one aroused, he began asking questions.

"Gave him gold, you say?"

"Yes."

"Struck him first?"

"Yes."

"What d'ye think of it?"

The captain leaned over with a sudden abandonment of reserve.

"What do I think of it? I don't think the man who came up to him was a beggar. I think Buhammei was frightened for some reason we can't know. I think he was annoyed because your soldiers had surrounded us all the day; but I don't believe the Berber was a beggar because his attitude was that of veneration and respect."

"Ah! What then?"

"What then? How can I fill in the gaps? You seem to know all about the tragedy up on the mountain, which, of course, is to me inexplicable. I should like to know what you think of that. It was your man who did the job, in what I suppose this country calls a very workmanlike manner."

For a full minute, the kaid did not reply, and, when he did speak, it was as if he had been arranging the details of his argument.

"To begin with, Captain Whitney," said he, "I think this man Buhammei is dangerous. I have thought so from the time I first saw him. You must understand that I am a man listening for whispers, or clutching at straws in the wind, eagerly seeking anything which will enable me to protect myself and the cause I have made my own. I trust Sidi Suleyman above any man at my command, and those horsemen you saw with him were picked by him for their bravery and loyalty. You saw the squad drilling at the foot of

the mountain, and probably surmised they were there for your protection. From the time you left the city gates until you returned, you were never out of sight or sound. It was not a useless precaution, for your life, at least, was in danger."

Dick gave a start of astonishment and an exclamation of surprise.

"Yes," the kaïd said. "Sidi Suleyman grappled with that fellow, and killed him because he had no time to do otherwise. Perhaps, you noticed a rifle lying on the ground beside the dead man?"

"Yes," assented Dick.

"The man was taking a very careful aim at you. His finger already touched the trigger, when Sidi shot him. So far, we have been totally unable to establish his identity, or to learn whether he had confederates within call. The presumption is that he was alone."

"Just a crank, eh? — out gunning for a Christian dog?"

"Perhaps. You never can tell. Had you been alone, I might think so, or I might conclude that this fellow, who was evidently from the thieving Beni-Hassan, was merely looking for loot. Plenty of those chaps would pot-shoot a man for his cuff-links. But this man must have known that our friend, Buhammei, was with you. I don't think there was any collusion, for Buhammei is too intelligent to have been involved in so clumsy an affair."

The captain nodded his head slowly, as if agreeing with this chain of logic.

"Now comes the other event. A desert sheik rushes

up to pay his respects to Buhammei, recognizing him as a superior of some sort — agent for smuggling arms, a possible promoter of revolution, or a half-dozen other things — and, by this blunder, Buhammei fears that his real station will be betrayed. He promptly beats the man down, and then salves his action with a handful of gold. And I want to tell you, captain, that very few men, be they Moor or foreigner, would dare horse-whip one of these free chieftains. He knew what he was doing, and dared. Buhammei, to my mind, although I have no proof, or direct evidence, of anything derogatory to him, is the most dangerous man in Fez to-night.”

He leaned forward toward the American, and lowered his voice almost to a whisper.

“You will see that I am giving you my full confidence, when I tell you that I am now thoroughly convinced that trouble is brewing here in Morocco. It can mean nothing but revolt, and, as His Majesty’s most trusted officer, I shall try to prevent it. There will be no change of dynasty before I am gone.”

The emphatic declaration of the sturdy little adventurer gave the American a further insight into his character that aroused admiration. Dick waited for more, but the kaid, as though tired of talking, was smoking hard, and staring straight ahead. Hoping to lead him on, the captain questioned him, but got nothing save monosyllables in reply.

“Charlotte and your sister had planned that we were to visit the mosques to-morrow, to see as much as is permitted,” said the captain. “Do you think it safe?”

"Um-m-yes," answered the kaid; "safer now than it might be ten days later."

"Aren't you two rather unsociable?" Charlotte's voice called; and, "Why don't you join us?" added Margaret.

Dick stood up, and the kaid, with more deliberation, did likewise. They joined the group, and, quite involuntarily, Whitney found himself again walking beside Margaret Clarke, who, as if it had been the previous topic of conversation, began talking of the tragedy in the Garden of Fate. She paused beside the fountain, and looked down into the lighted depths, and he saw that her face was troubled. Absorbed in watching the play of changing lights reflected on her countenance, he said nothing for an interval, and she, in her abstraction, did not observe that he was staring at her. She looked up at him quite suddenly, and, for some reason neither could understand, both dropped their eyes.

"You know my thought!" she asserted, as though she had surprised him in the act of reading her mind.

"Of the young Berber woman?" he answered, without hesitation.

"Yes," she said, slowly. "And, do you know? I don't believe I was thinking quite sanely. I have always tried to be normal, and to suppress my emotions, when I thought they were running away with my sense."

She was staring into the basin again, and he, wishing to hear more, urged her on.

"What were you thinking?"

"Whether I, in spite of my religious belief and

trained suppression, would have done as that woman did."

He turned fully toward her, in amazement. From what he had seen of her, he would have believed her the last one on earth to sanction even momentarily the action of the unfortunate wife of the harem. He was not quite certain that he had not sustained a shock, and she, glancing up, flushed and came to her own defense.

"No," she said, "I do not believe in self-destruction. The idea itself is repugnant and horrible. But I am wondering if I could be capable of it under those conditions. I have never loved any man, even my own brothers, so deeply that I could not continue to exist without him after the sorrow of separation had worn away. But, somehow, this is different; Somehow, I envy that girl for the great attainment of love — a love which was so big that, when she found the future irrevocably hopeless, because she could have no chance to explain, when she knew that she could never again feel the clutch of the baby hands, understood that she was dethroned from her place, and doomed to a life of weary imprisonment — well, it were better to go. And, so, in my mind, I am trying to comprehend what it must be, what it could be, to have such an affection for anyone, and I begin to doubt myself, because I am not sure that the barbaric sheik's daughter did not have a bigger, truer, warmer heart than I have."

She met his eyes so frankly and so unabashedly that he caught himself studying their depths, and wondering what could be seen in them if such a love were to come into her life, possessing her to the exclusion of all other

things, tearing loose the bonds of cold repression, which she had succeeded in weaving round her habits and methods of thought. Without any tangible or reasonable cause, he looked away from her, back toward the wall, at the house, and then on to the other group, like a man seeking escape from some impending dishonor. If she appreciated his actions, her face did not betray it, and, when he brusquely suggested that they rejoin the others, she went with him in silence. As they came up with their friends, they heard the vivacious voice of the consul's daughter mimicking someone she had known, who was the subject of a reminiscence. Both the consul and the kaid were laughing quietly in evident enjoyment; but the latter, recalled to the passing of time by the appearance of his sister and the captain, looked at his watch, and said he must go. Together, all walked out of the garden and into the palace beyond, where they bade the Englishman good-night, and at once afterward retired to their own apartments.

But Dick Whitney lay and watched the ceiling for hours, trying to form a conclusion as to what future plans he must make for the happiness of all. He at last dropped to sleep with something approaching regret that he had ever come to Morocco.

CHAPTER NINE

IT was early in the morning of the following day when the two girls and Whitney started on their visit to the mosques of El Bali, in the old city of Fez. Before them marched the stately figure of one of their servants, a man of splendid stature whose dignified presence and occasional commands to loiterers cleared a semblance of a way, through which they marched, while behind them stalked two others. The party had chosen to go on foot, although at the last moment the consul had protested with characteristic vigor, and had been overruled in characteristic way by his daughter. The officer made no interposition in behalf of either, but secretly preferred Charlotte's choice.

The mosque they had decided to inspect was that of El Karueen, and toward it, by a devious route, their guide led them.

"We could go a more direct way," Margaret Clarke said; "but, if we did, we could not pass the sanctuary bars and chains that cut off half of the holy places, and, besides, would be compelled to go through some streets that are not pleasant to sensitive noses."

She smiled reminiscently, and Charlotte, looking back over her shoulder, laughed heartily.

"We came to a street blocked with donkeys coming from the slaughter houses," she said, and left the rest

to Whitney's imagination, which required small kindling since he had seen a portion of Morocco.

"Of course," the English girl said, "you are familiar with El Karueen? No? Well, it was commenced shortly after the city was founded, in the ninth century. It is asserted that the mosque held more than twenty thousand worshipers at one time, although I doubt it, unless they were packed in. It has more than four hundred columns, and is a forest of aisles and naves, recesses and niches, of which you will be able to catch a glimpse from the outside. But the points of its history which appeal to me most, despite the fact that Sultans, and sheiks, emirs and humble ones of the faithful have contributed to its extension and beautifying, are these: First, it was founded, and all the initial work done, by a woman of Kaiuran, who fell heir to riches after she was a widow, and her only son had died. She impoverished herself for the memorial; Second, it stands to me as a tangible evidence of faith, and it doesn't much matter in the sight of God, I hope, what creed we may have, as long as we follow it, and do the very best that is in us to do."

She looked earnest and sincere, as she walked on, saying no more. Nor did Whitney ask for more, for he began to venerate her belief. Had he wished to continue the conversation, it would have been difficult to do so, since now they had entered a crowded street, and were passing between bars intended to keep out all four-footed animals. This was thronged with white-robed men wearing turbans, or pointed hoods, with here and there a red fez showing that the soldiers were every-

where. The mingled scents of a market and a coffee-roaster came to them as they pushed forward, and the press became so dense that Whitney feared they would be halted. But, always, the white-robed men, stately and stealthy, slid to one side under the commands of the guide, who persistently called, "*Balak!*" "Way — make way!" in the Arabic tongue, adding something which Charlotte explained as a sort of announcement that the sister of Kaid Hamilton Clarke desired to pass.

Some of the men stared at them for a moment, but, as a rule, the people dropped their eyes to the ground, and crowded back. At the bazaar shops, they paused and loitered in front of the gloomy recesses, where sat the dark-skinned men who stolidly and reluctantly answered questions. The money-changers, counting over heaps of blackened coins with claw-like fingers, piling up tiny columns of gold, or bickering softly with some customer, the more progressive salesmen beseeching them to buy metal ornaments, some of which were ancient and barbaric, and now and then some word of English spoken for their benefit, all seemed a part of a clamorous, illusory play. Agile boys ran hither and thither, sometimes getting within reach of their guide's hand, and he seldom failed to use it effectively. Once, they passed a place where women, most of whom were veritable hags, sold vegetables to others, who shrouded their heads when the men passed, and peeped with intense curiosity from the one uncovered eye.

In lieu of greeting, they were certain of curses, and twice on their way they passed holy men whose chief

claim to attention seemed to be that they could curse more loudly than could the others, and had a vocabulary rendered large by much practise. One was nude, and brandished a long stick, with which he made passes in the air, muttering meaningless sentences, and always he was given great veneration. After unburdening himself of various maledictions, he resumed his sky-gazing, and left them alone. A group of soldiers were holding a heated argument with a man before a heap of merchandise, and at the sound of the kaid's name came to attention, and saluted with considerable precision.

Another man thrust himself forward, clad in rather a motley garb, and reiterated, "Want guide? Want guide? English spoken. Gibraltar been. Me Gibraltar been." He thumped himself proudly on the chest, and rolled his eyes until one of the men in the rear swooped toward him, when he retreated into, and vanished behind, the whirl of white mantles that seemed forever in restless motion.

They turned out beneath dentilated arches into quieter streets, where, through open doorways they caught flashes of courtyards; and once, in a long open stretch, they heard whisperings above, and saw on a roof-terrace a row of hooded heads where the women of some nabob's harem stared at them, each with the one unblinking eye, the blackened finger-tips holding the *yashmaks* as if to conceal a world of charms from profanation.

At last, the party came to the low-domed pile that was once the most magnificent mosque in this portion of the world. Forewarned, they made no attempt to enter,

but contented themselves with peering into the place where of the hundreds of hanging lamps but a few were burning dimly above the prostrate and kneeling worshippers. They even glimpsed the pulpit, with its incrustation of ivory, ebony and gems, but could not see the place where the splendid Mirab niche faced Mecca, for it is said to have been covered even from sight of the worshippers.

Whitney, discovering that several men had gathered behind, and were glowering at them and muttering to one another because of their curiosity, turned away with a sense of disappointment. The mosque had little beyond its historical associations to attract an alien, and he had not that admiration for everything religious which the English girl expressed. They walked several paces away, and then halted.

"Look! Look!" Margaret suddenly whispered, excitedly facing an entrance to the mosque.

A man, clad in a flowing burnous, had stopped to speak to another before the door. That it was but a word in passing was shown because he again started to enter. He had been holding a fold of his mantle round his face, but, as he stopped to say a farewell word to the other, he released his hold for an instant, and they beheld the dark face of Buhammei. The fold gathered up again, he slipped into the dark opening, and was lost to sight. It was the first time they had seen him in the costume of his country, and all at once it seemed that he was infinitely removed from their friendship or acquaintance, that he had suddenly become as barbaric as any of the white-clad figures round them, and had

retrograded back into the half-civilization of his Moorish ancestors.

Charlotte voiced the feelings of the others, when she said, thoughtfully:

"I'm not sure that I shall like him again, or be interested even. He is too much like a savage, after all."

They had intended to visit the Mosque of Edris, where the bones of the founder of the city rest, but something in the chance encounter made them relinquish the idea.

"It doesn't matter," Margaret said to the captain. "You will see plenty of mosques every time you step out of doors. There are hundreds of them everywhere."

"And all just as accessible," Charlotte added.

"Very interesting, indeed," Dick commented, with a touch of sarcasm; and, again, the English girl looked at him with a shade of reproach.

They made their way back to the consular palace, passing a square where several decrepit fountains were languidly throwing water upward, and where the greenery appeared tarnished and unkempt. It was the noon hour, and from the minarets round came the call of the faith: "*Allah Akbar!*" "God is great!" They saw many figures with faces turned eastward, and, for an instant, the tawdriness of everything was lost in the hush that followed, which told them more plainly than could any words that wherever a Mussulman dwelt beneath the midday-sun, a prayer was ascending. It relieved the Arabian world of its shabbiness — this splendid, though in many cases perfunctory, adherence to a faith that was old, and had cost so much of devo-

tion, even to the sacrifice of life itself. The American could not help feeling a certain respect for a people who would so closely observe their faith, and for a moment he forgot the subtle, crafty and cruel heart-beat beneath. In a brooding stillness, they made their way to their home, where they found a note from the Honorable Bob, to the effect that he was going directly from a business appointment to the Sultan's palace, to which he had been duly called by the messenger of the Grand Shereef Mousan. He could not refrain from exultation even in his note, which, after a dignified opening, closed with: "I'm going to make that Sultan sit up and listen to a voice from Wyoming, and don't you forget it!"

It was not until evening came, and Kaid Hamilton arrived, that the consul told them of his reception. They went out to the verandah overlooking the Garden of Fate to hear his experiences, although to Clarke much of it was known.

"It was this way," the Honorable Bob began, after settling himself into a comfortable position, with his legs loosely crossed and his cigar sparking in his hand. "He sent for me, and I went."

He turned his head toward the kaid, whose face was impassive, although, had the light been strong enough, it would have disclosed a flicker of amusement in his eyes.

"You know that square where the Sultan holds his public receptions, the one facing on the river? Well, I blundered into that first, havin' lost my way a trifle, and I don't know as I'd have got there in time if an old

chap with purple breeches and a fez with considerable gold on it hadn't helped us. I took him right into my confidence, and he called another fellow, who took me round in the right direction.

"When I finally got up to the throne, I found His Majesty sitting cross-legged on a cushion, in a little place which looked as if it were for a statue. He was nearly as talkative. He had his shoes laid off to one side, so as to keep from wearin' them out too much, and a sword, half-plastered with diamonds, laid on a cushion close by his hand. There was a green belt across him, and in his girdle he had a poniard, which he pulled his mantle over as I came in, half-led and half-followed by men with more embroidery than I've ever seen before. The Sultan had one of these fellers bring me a chair, and motioned to it with his hand. I sat down, and looked round at the big, bare room, whose only furniture, as far as I could see, consisted of clocks—about a thousand of 'em, and a graphophone, or some sort of phonograph arrangement. I had made a memorandum of things I wanted to talk about, but the man outside told me it wasn't considered polite to refer to anything while talkin' to the Sultan, so I didn't drag it out.

"I started right in by tellin' him that the United States had sent me over here to do my best, and that about the only thing I'd found to do, besides signin' all sorts of papers, was to correct this grabbin' of naturalized-American citizens and throwin' 'em into the stockade until they dug up. Muley pretended he didn't know nothin' about it, and couldn't talk any English.

He had a man standin' up back of me who interpreted everything. This chap said His Majesty would like to know if I could name any cases, and I got excited, and named all of 'em.

"Then the Sultan asked somethin' else, and the man repeated it to me. What he said was, 'Well, all these men were either Jews or Arabs who have gone to America, became citizens as quickly as they could, and then come back here to do as they wanted to, aren't they?'

"I said, 'Yes.'

"'Well, if they wanted to become citizens of the United States, why didn't they stay there?' he asked. 'What business have they got comin' back here to bother us?'

"To be on the square, it was a pretty hard question to answer. I sat lookin' at the Sultan for about a minute, and then let loose on him.

"'That hasn't anything to do with it,' I says. 'These men have their papers, and my book of rules says that an American citizen's goin' to be protected, no matter what his original brand was. I'm not interested in brands that ain't regular, or in mavericks. I don't care a cuss what you do with citizens of other countries; but I'm here to say that I'm goin' to raise a holler every time one of our men gets jugged. And, if the holler isn't paid attention to, I'll yell loud enough so it'll be heard in Washington, D. C., and that goes!'

"The Sultan began to look restless when I began to bang my fist on my knee. He didn't wait for the interpreter, and gave his hand away by answerin' me himself in English, and then I knew I had him goin' some.

“ ‘His excellency, the American consul, forgets,’ he says, ‘that I can have him recalled as objectionable.’

“ ‘You can, eh?’ I answered. ‘Well, you just try it on. If you do, I’ll bark like a coyote until the American people get sore, and what they won’t do to you and your two-by-four country can be left out of the school-books.’

“ ‘Warships, I suppose?’ he said, lookin’ tired and a little footsore.

“ ‘Indemnities,’ I said; ‘money for damages, which they’ll collect if they have to sweat it out of all Morocco.’

“ ‘I waited for that to soak in, and then went ahead in a different way.

“ ‘See here, Your Majesty,’ I said. ‘I’m not wantin’ to be disrespectful nor impolite. I know that men who rule countries have a heap of things to attend to. We ought to be friends — you and me.’

“ ‘Well?’ he said.

“ ‘Why, it’s just this way,’ I answered. ‘I’m no diplomatist. I’m from out West where, when we’ve got much to say, we say it; but I’m expectin’ to get blown up every time the mail comes in because the state department at Washington is gettin’ mighty sore about this citizen business.’

“ ‘He began to look serious.

“ ‘But these affairs have been goin’ on for many years before you came,’ he says, ‘and they haven’t done anything heretofore.’

“ ‘That’s just why they sent me — Old Bob Marshall — over here,’ I came back at him. ‘They’re

tired of promises, and are gettin' ready to do somethin' else.'

"He flared up a little, but, before he could have me sent out, I held up my hand, and leaned over toward him.

" 'Now, what's the use in anybody doin' anything foolish?' I said. 'Ain't it better for you to give an order to your soldiers to keep their hands off naturalized Americans, and tell what you'll do to 'em if they don't, than it is to have America jumpin' on you? Why, man, if that happens, every European country to whom Morocco owes money will be pilin' in to save their own credits and get back their own money; you can't borrow from any one because they'll be afraid to lend to you, and, the first thing you know, it'll go on and on until half of Europe'll have soldiers squattin' round the custom-houses of Morocco, your own people will blame you, there'll be revolution after revolution, and everything will go to smash. And all for what? Just because you didn't say, "Mr. Marshall, I'll put a stop to this, and you and me'll be friends."'

"He sat and looked at me a long time. Finally, he says, 'Your Excellency is new to diplomatic affairs?'

" 'Why, sure,' I answered. 'This is the first time I ever had a government job in my life. I don't know anything about it, except that there are certain things I want, and which I believe you're man enough to grant when you see they're good.'

"He smiled, and that encouraged me.

" 'More'n that,' I went on, 'I think you see the way I'm fixed up, know that it's a pretty hard job for me,

ain't got nothin' against me personally, and, if it don't cost too much trouble, are willin' to help me out. That's the way most men are, when they get right down to the bottom of things, and talk plainly to each other.'

"He just sat there and studied me for about two whole minutes, and then said: 'Well, this is a new kind of diplomacy, indeed,' and laughed out loud. 'I believe I rather like it and you, because I don't believe you have any interest in anything, or would do anything that you would hesitate to tell me about. No ulterior objects! I shall show my belief in you by havin' the question investigated immediately, and shall let you hear from me.'"

"I stood up, knowin' there was nothin' more to say.

"'Thanks, Your Majesty,' I said. 'I thought you were all right! And if it ever comes my way to be of any service to you, I'll do it, and don't you forget it!'

"I'd have shaken hands with him if he'd wanted to, but he didn't seem anxious. He sat there, still smilin' and watchin' me when I backed out of the door the way I've been told I should, and, somehow, I felt kind of sorry for him and right friendly. And, somehow, I believe I'm goin' to make good on the only business the United States has got with Morocco, after all; that I'm goin' to make it safer for these naturalized fellers to come over here. And, after that — so help me Bob! — I'm goin' to chuck the job, and go back West!"

A match with which the kaïd was lighting a cigar at that moment illumined his face, and the American officer noticed that he was smiling a smile of ineffable amusement and tolerance, but, too, somehow his face expressed a mighty scepticism.

CHAPTER TEN

THE Honorable Bob was to learn much of the procrastination of Morocco, even though he had been assured by the Sultan that prompt investigations would be made. Several days went by in which he lived a life of superb ease and contentment, and took his admission to the ruler so seriously that he devoted many hours of composition to notifying the state department at Washington of his action and the result. It simmered down to a very characteristic letter before he affixed his big seal, of which he himself stood in more awe perhaps than did any one else, and mailed it. It was less than a page in length, and contained full announcement of what he wanted the United States government to do. He made it plain that he wanted to be "backed up" in case the Sultan "called his bluff," and closed with the naïve postscript, that he hoped the secretary of state was "enjoying his usual good health."

He could scarcely dream that this gentleman, after receiving the report, tramped angrily up and down his private office for a few minutes, saying many emphatic things which might indicate that the diplomatic notions of Robert Marshall, consul to Morocco, were not entirely satisfactory. Plainly, it was not patent to the Honorable Bob that he had grappled with a question which was time-honored, had never been satisfactorily

settled, was a thorn in the flesh of the foreign department, and regarded as a "sleeping dog," which, by preference, no consul should kick.

"That man will yet cause us all sorts of trouble," the secretary predicted to himself, foreseeing that to recall the consul in the face of everything he had done would be to call down the wrath of the American jingoist through the free-spoken press, and such things had been used effectively as campaign-material in presidential elections, one of which was at that moment being hotly waged. But he could not help grinning broadly at the recollection of the times he had met the interesting Westerner, and the homely postscript that concluded the latest official report. He could do nothing other than write a veiled letter of caution, admonish the consul that the United States was rather too busy at this time to offer him assistance, and suppress an inclination to state the impossibility of sending a fleet to enforce his demands in case he should get into trouble because the price of coal had recently gone up. But his most devout, although unexpressed, hope was that the consul would succumb to the lethargic influences of climate, and become a little less energetic in his office.

In this season of rest, the consul, having nothing else to do, became highly interested in gardening, to the amazement of his Arab gardeners, who failed to understand why a man should work unless he had to. He fished out from the bottom of a suit-case something that sent Charlotte into shrieks of laughter, Margaret Clarke into politely suppressed smiles and Whitney into many jocular remarks. The three, entering the garden

one morning, found the consul before them, clad in a pair of worn blue overalls, tucked into his Western high-heeled boots, a blue flannel shirt, held together at the neck by a bandanna handkerchief, of which the ends fluttered behind, with a familiar and much-worn white hat on his head at a convenient angle. He was energetically spading the soil at the foot of some rose-bushes when they approached him, and looked rather abashed as they spoke.

"Well, what next?" his daughter remarked, cheerfully. "Are you the American consul, or a hired hand?"

"Neither, just now," the Honorable Bob drawled, as he wiped his forehead on the back of his dirt-covered hands. "Plain Bob Marshall, feelin' more at home than he has in a mighty long time, wearin' the kind of clothes that fits him, and tryin' to forget that he was ever fool enough to come east of Omaha."

He gave a stalwart dig into the earth.

"Another thing I've found out is that it pays a man to get his hands dirty from hard work about once every so often; it helps him to philosophize after they're clean."

He looked up when the Arab gardener gave a cry of alarm, and discovered that he had cut through the roots of a rare rose-bush.

"Humph!" he said. "I ain't no farmer, nohow. Serves me right! Here — you — take this spade."

He trudged away to the nearest fountain, where he proceeded to wash his hands in the brimming basin, and appeared not to hear the jesting shouts that were called

after him by the other members of the household to whom he had been homilizing but a moment before. And they, amused at his sudden change of front, walked backward and forward in the paths until he joined them a few minutes later with a bundle of mail, which had just been handed him by a servant from the outer gates.

The captain had nothing beyond club notices and the stereotyped acknowledgment of a report from the war office, and, after idly tearing these open and glancing at them, he sat on the verandah, and watched the two girls who were eagerly reading their letters. The consul had withdrawn to his own particular den, and Dick envied him for the amount of work he had to do, and then became absorbed in thoughts that were not altogether pleasant. He was loath to remain under false colors, dreaded to say anything that would bring even a trace of sadness to the girl who had been his playmate, yet he knew, in spite of all his efforts to reason otherwise, that he found a different and more profound pleasure in the company of Margaret Clarke than he had ever known hitherto. He was not willing already to admit that this enjoyment arose from any other feeling than respect and friendship; but he was sensible enough to foresee that, for his own happiness, he must leave Fez. Even as he sat and pondered over his own likes and dislikes, he found himself watching her.

She had torn open a letter with a cumbersome seal, the wax of which showed a crest. With the envelope lying on the step beside her and the open pages in her hand, she sat staring ahead of her into distance in a

manner that showed abstraction of mind. He had a sudden sense that something was annoying her, and longed to extend her his sympathy. He forebore saying anything, however, and contented himself with wondering what could have occasioned her distress. She turned to one page, and re-read it very carefully. He fancied that her eyes were almost on the verge of tears. He could no longer refrain from obtruding.

"I am afraid, Miss Clarke," he said softly, "that you have had bad news of some kind. Your face looks troubled."

She turned her head until she looked up at him, and there was something of gladness in her eyes, as if she were pleased that he had shown delicate sympathy and even something of distress.

"Yes," she said in a serious voice, "I have. My brother, Lord West, is ill. You remember him, and, furthermore, there is a message in this letter for you, whom he remembers. Let me read," she said, referring to one of the sheets.

"I am heartily glad that Captain Whitney is there with you — indeed, I am glad to know of him once more. Remember me to him most sincerely."

"I dislike reading flattering things to people," she said. "Besides, that is all of his remembrances."

"Ah," he replied, "but I am interested. You might finish."

"No," she smiled, "I can't; but I don't know why you couldn't read it."

"That part," she said, indicating with her finger. He took the sheet from her, and read curiously, won-

dering if the peer really retained any remembrance of days so far back and so insignificant.

"I cannot begin to tell you," it read, "of the immense regard I formed for that boy, for, after all, he was but little more at that time. He was so loyal, so gentlemanly, so honest and so brave, that he left an impression on my memory which cannot be effaced. His associates and brother officers told me of almost incredibly valorous deeds which he had performed on that far frontier, but of which I could never lead him to speak. The American army has many precedents, one of which is similar to the time-honored saw of our own service, that to be an officer is to be a gentleman; that one must be the latter to remain the former. Richard Whitney fulfilled both requirements, being thoughtful and chivalrous, quiet-spoken and quick-acting. I knew him better than he thought, for I knew of him before we met, learned him while we were together, and can only say now that I am sincerely glad my little sister and the boy brother who wanders far have had the opportunity to know and respect him as I do. Again I say, tell him of me — that I have not forgotten the splendid days in the hills, the glorious sunrises of the deserts and the many weeks in which he and I rolled our blankets side by side, while he was more than escort and always friend."

Dick sat with the letter in his hand, thinking of the time when the quiet Englishman had been with him, of the long trails and of the respect he formed for the man who, despite his being unaccustomed to the country, was such a game sportsman and gentle comrade.

He was sorry that he had not kept up the acquaintance-ship; but he had labored under the American prejudice, which had made him believe that a peer of Great Britain was a trifle different from other men, and would not care to be "bothered" with a chance friend of hunting expeditions indulged in before assuming the weighty responsibilities of a title. He handed the sheet back to the girl, who was now absorbed in another letter. She took it, and again faced him.

"Your brother is kind," he said. "I am grateful to know that I did nothing to lose his esteem, and, too, that I am to hear of him again through his sister. You say he is ill?"

"Yes; but he thinks it is not an illness of serious nature."

"I am very sorry that he is ill. You are not going to him?"

"No; he wishes it otherwise. Furthermore, he specially cautions me to say nothing of it to Hamilton. He says he does not want to add to the worries which he surmises our brother already sustains; that, if it were a grave illness, he would say so, and that I must say nothing; that, if it becomes at all serious, he will write me, and that meanwhile I am to remain here, and do all I can to encourage our only brother in his work, and comfort him when he needs it."

"He is unselfish. If you were my sister, Miss Clarke, I doubt if I should have such fortitude in illness. I think I should want you by my side."

She turned toward him with wide eyes that were startled, and for the first time they read in each other

something they had not recognized before. Both were confused. The lightly uttered words had become fraught with a significance of immense import, which both felt, and both regretted for some reason that neither could understand or analyze. He got up from his seat as if he had to apologize, looked at Charlotte who was still absorbed in her letters, at the English girl, who was opening another with fingers that were not as steady as their wont, then he walked down the steps between them, and out into the garden. He did not turn back, but was conscious that her eyes were following him with a troubled look as he disappeared into the forest of bushes in the rose-garden. He did not know that in them shone also a gleam of happiness and wistfulness, which could not be suppressed. He was contrite with a great self-accusation, and determined that he must stifle his increasing affection. In this mood, he trudged moodily to and fro in a shaded alley that was beyond the sight of anyone, where the birds twittered meaninglessly, yet suggested melodies to him, and the very breeze, sweeping in and out among the leaves and branches, whispered strange thoughts, and breathed of tenderer things than he had ever dreamed. So absorbed was he that, when he turned into the main path leading to the middle portal, he almost collided with Kaid Clarke, who had come rapidly in with a sun-helmet jammed down over his eyes, and with spurs clinking from his embroidered boots.

"Oh, I beg pardon," the general exclaimed, stepping nimbly out of the way.

"My fault," the American answered, heartily. He

was pitying the kaid for the knowledge that was withheld — that his brother was ill.

A leaf of an acacia fluttered down between the two, and fell at their feet. All was so quiet that they could hear its impact. The American expected something serious from the man who, standing quietly before him, stared up at him with calm eyes.

“Ah-h, it’s — it’s rather a nice morning,” the kaid said. “Ah-h, anybody about the house?”

Dick looked at the general, and wished that he would betray some deeper emotion, or utter something less stilted, or say nothing, indeed, if he would not unloose the intelligence lying beneath the mask.

“Yes,” the American answered; “your sister and Miss Marshall.”

The face opposite did not respond. It preserved the air of blankness.

“Thanks,” the kaid said; but he made no move to go, nor gave any sign of saying more. This reticence was beginning to be annoying.

“Shall we go in?” the captain asked, more to break the pause than for any other reason.

“Ah — thanks!”

They turned together, and walked down the path, neither saying anything, and, as they approached the verandah, the American noticed that the English girl hastily gathered an envelope and some sheets of paper into a bundle, and doubled them with other letters into her hand. She would obey the admonitions of the distant brother, and keep the adventurer in ignorance of the peer’s illness.

"Good-morning," she called to him, with an assumption of cheerfulness; and the kaid advanced, and gave her a dutiful, but feelingless, peck on the cheek. The American girl looked up at him with a laugh, and then her face sobered a trifle.

"You look worried," she said, giving him her hand; "you are not happy."

He appeared startled at her discernment.

"No," he said, slowly; "I'm not sure that I am."

He sat down on the topmost step, with his helmet in his hand, and ran his fingers along his chin.

"What is it?"

"Nothing much, only the never-ending reports of trouble that no one can fathom."

She looked sympathetic. The captain, standing a few steps away, watched her keenly, but she did not seem to know that he was there. Margaret looked at her brother, and dropped back to her seat on the step from which she had arisen when he greeted her. The kaid turned toward Dick, as if the news were for him in particular.

"Unrest among the douars of the plains between here and the Atlas," he said, curtly. "Beggars can't keep quiet. More than that, we can't tell what it's about. Got no men with any sense. If I were where I could get into the camps the way they can, I'd learn something, or be ashamed to show my face. Rum lot — whole crowd of them!"

Charlotte laughed at him, and his sister looked up at her and then at the half-drooping, despondent figure. Dick felt sympathy, and wondered what he would do

if he had no one whom he could trust in an emergency.

"I'll have to go out on my own account before long," the kaid said, slowly.

His sister looked at him steadily, and her eyes grew perturbed.

"Hamilton," she said, "is it necessary? Can't you send some one else? Why, it's positively dangerous! You know that you are hated by everyone who is not in sympathy with the Sultan, Muley-Mohammed. Nothing would please the discontented more than to have you in their hands! They might — they might even — even kill you!"

Her voice had dropped as she spoke. Dick saw that Charlotte's hands came slowly together before her, and that her fingers were interlocked. Had he looked at her face, he might have seen more, for it was overcast with an abrupt whiteness as if of dread, but he was watching the kaid, who was still calm, impassive and staring at his boot-toes. He experienced a sharp sense of relief, although for no reason that he could have explained. He foresaw a chance for action. In one single instant, there swept through his mind scenes of the desert, of great spaces, of trials to be met and of obstacles to be overcome. He half-envied the soldier of fortune who was making a good fight under such adverse conditions, and who perhaps was about to face considerable odds.

"General," he said, stepping forward, "I'd like to go with you, if you do go out. I'm tired of inaction, and — well, I want a breath of untrammelled air. Can you arrange it, or am I asking too much?" He did not

see that Margaret Clarke was watching him, and that her lips were half-parted.

The kaid looked up quite gratefully, and his face warmed into a smile of friendliness.

"Do you know," he said, awkwardly, "I'm glad you say that? I've been thinking I should like someone with me on whom I could depend to the end of the trench. I've often thought I should like to have a white man like you at my back. Yes, you can come, if I go. I'll manage it."

The American was not sure whether he should extend his hand as impulse urged, or continue to repress himself; but he chose the latter course, and his answer was as formal and stupid as would have been the kaid's under reversed conditions.

"Thanks," he said, repeating the remark that he had so often heard Clarke make in acknowledgment. The latter only smiled, and turned to Charlotte, who, with a dejected face, had seated herself beside Margaret.

In spite of the fact that he contemplated a dangerous mission, the kaid appeared unreasonably happy for some reason, although he suggested it more by attitude than by facial change. Although he had been with them but a short time, he jammed his helmet down on his head, and stood up.

"Yes, I'll arrange it, captain, and shall be very glad to do so," he said, evenly.

He stepped down to the lowest step, and looked out at the dry fountain, then walked toward the basin on the still surface of which the sun's rays were reflected.

"Ah," he said, turning on his heelless boots, his spurs

raking up little rifts of gravel, "I'm coming back for dinner to-night — got to go now."

As if that were sufficient, he faced about and walked down the path, and the American thought he caught, clear and distinct, a low-whistled tune as the general passed through the gates to the outer garden. Dick wondered what kind of a man Kaid Hamilton Clarke might be, and how that man would act under fire.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THOSE who lived in the Garden of Fate had a season of inaction, which extended over two weeks, for the kaid's interests kept him in Fez, and his trip to the turbulent interior was deferred. It was, however, a time filled with subtle changes and little events which, although outwardly of no importance, were destined to decide many things. The kaid's face was less grave than it had been; it had softened in some of its lines, and his eyes smiled more frequently than before. When he entered the garden, his step was more eager, and his voice less restrained. Sometimes, he entered into a conversation, and talked entertainingly for several minutes — a newly developed characteristic, which caused his sister much surprise, and led her to fear that the climate was making him feverish.

The consul's daughter, on the contrary, had become less radiant than of old, laughed less frequently, told stories with less zest, and found the ridiculous or humorous side of happenings more rarely. A certain seriousness had crept into the lines of her forehead, and she appeared unusually thoughtful.

Dick Whitney noticed the change in the others little, having become obtuse through his own brooding. He had taken to spending more time away from the garden, and had rambled through *Il Bali*, the old city, and *Jadeed*, the new, until it seemed to him that he knew

every alley-way, every path and every street, and could chart them. The very saints in the *cubas*, the beggars who wallowed in the shade and the sullen masters of bazaars had come to know the sight of his lithe, well-set figure as he walked restlessly past them, with troubled and unobservant eyes.

Always studious, the American passed whole days in mastering the Arabic tongue, and, having a natural facility for languages, he had come to understand nearly all that he heard; hence, he flushed when, on one of his moody rambles, a venerable Arab with a spotless burnous halted before him, stretched out a dark hand, pointed at him, and said:

“Ah, Christian, thou art a man running away from himself!”

He recognized the truth of the charge, and yet dreaded to run further, knowing that to run from one's-self is the hardest of all races. Now and then, like one lost and reckless, he gave himself into the hands of dangerous companionship, and found rest: it being when, after a day's study and tramping, he would yield to circumstances, and walk or sit quietly beside the English girl in the garden. She made the situation more difficult by bestowing a new confidence and serene trust, reading in him those characteristics which her brother, the peer, had so admired. Her reserve had melted as his had grown, until she had no hesitancy in letting him have long glimpses into her mind, revealing, day by day, great depths and lofty ideals.

The American discovered that Margaret's love for the kaid was almost idolatry, although by act he had

never seen her observe the usual outward forms. He permitted himself the enjoyment of being with her at times, because he read in her attitude nothing but a frank and unconcealed liking, such as any good woman might give to any congenial and worthy man. Indeed, this very frankness was his only solace, and led him on and on, in the belief that he alone, of all those in the intimate group, was predestined to suffer.

Accusing himself of neglect and unworthiness, Dick strove to be more devoted to Charlotte, giving her attentions of which he had never before thought, and being more solicitous for her happiness than ever before. And she accepted all in the belief that she alone could make him happy. Once, she had gone carelessly along, believing that he had no more than a brotherly affection for her; but, now, she was convinced that she had been mistaken in her estimate of his regard. She did not divine that his mind was in such a turmoil that, could he have done so, he would have fled from Fez, to try and scourge his affections into submission; nor did she know that he regarded Morocco as a volcano on the eve of eruption, and felt bound to stay for the protection of all those he loved, and to fight for them if need be. And so, of them all, the two who went ahead in the greatest happiness and the most blissful ignorance, were the Honorable Bob and the kaid, the former feeling that his important statecraft was being regarded, and the latter reveling in the companionship of the only girl he had ever met who could make his slow pulses throb, and teach him a sentiment that he had never known.

The other actor in the slowly culminating drama was none other than Buhammei, who, more and more, despite their feeling toward him, had encroached upon the stage with an insidious persistence that was disarming. He was adroit, smooth, deferential and dignified. He never varied in his attitude, or in his manner. He was as immaculate as ever in garb, and punctilious in performance. And yet, imperceptibly, something had changed him from the commonplace — a something that gave the kaid a sense of uneasiness, and added to his distrust.

Never a day passed that the Moor did not call at the consulate, usually with some pretext that made it almost impossible to deny him audience in the Garden of Fate, to the history of which he had never referred since the night when he had told its tragic story. Invariably, the morning found his dragoman, the stately Arab who had accompanied him on that excursion to Mount Zalag, at their door. Now, it was with a bouquet of rare flowers, now with a package of Moroccan sweet-meats, or again with a package of magazines from that outside world which seemed so far away, with which, nevertheless, he maintained an incomprehensible communication.

Afternoon or evening would certainly find Buhammei entertaining, calm, self-possessed and mysterious, bringing with him a feeling of restraint that could not be overcome, and, too, with a suggestion of strength, which he might exert, if he wished, or a violence which would be barbaric if once it ran wild. Quite frequently, he brought presents to the consul's daughter; but they

were of such nature that she could scarcely decline to receive them. A quaint amulet from beyond the Atlas; the gay clasp of a woman's gown, with crude beading and old silver bangles that shone in the dusk like pearls; an antique ring with a curious history, a tiny carven box that had held cosmetics for some beauty of a forgotten harem—never of great value intrinsically, yet always interesting and rare; never suggestive of anything beyond friendship, yet betokening a constant thought. At first, these visits and the presents had been cause for good-natured jesting at Charlotte's expense, but she had accepted the situation with such girlish amusement that Buhammei and his ways were finally regarded as merely incidents of the day, features of the country, routine happenings like the risings of the sun. That Buhammei was more earnest than had been thought was proven on the evening when the peaceful time of inaction came to an end.

It was just as the shadows of evening were falling over the Garden of Fate, and the Honorable Bob had thrown himself into a chair in the depths of the house behind the great fountain, its soft splashing fitting his mood of relaxation, that the Moor was announced. The shrewd old man had never labored under any delusions concerning the cause of the Moor's visits, but he was surprised to be told that Buhammei's mission on this particular evening was for a personal interview. Charlotte, the English girl and the American officer had gone for a ride out beyond the city walls, and had not returned, so that the consul was quite alone. He good-humoredly told the servant to

bring Mr. Buhammei to the house in the garden, and remained with a thoughtful look until the visitor had entered. He had no warmth of feeling for Buhammei, nor any well-defined dislike, regarding the man rather with the indifference that he would have bestowed on any shop-keeper crouching in his den in the bazaars. He watched the Moor seat himself, and pulled at his white mustache, eying the other curiously, while waiting to learn the object of this visit. He was not kept long in doubt.

"Mr. Marshall," the Moor said, "I have come here to see you personally, because in my country there are certain forms which are observed on all such errands. First, I want to say something of myself: I am of a very old family in my country, and am a man of almost unlimited means. I can convince you of both these facts."

He hesitated for an instant, while the consul languidly studied him, as he sat in the embrace of an arm-chair, erect and assured.

"I'll take your word for both them things, Mr. Buhammei," the American said. "What next? What do you want?"

"I want to marry your daughter."

The Honorable Bob sat up with a jerk, and looked at the Moor with his mouth hanging open and his eyes wide and amused. He had never thought that the Moor's infatuation would go to this length. Then, as suddenly as he had sat up, he clapped his knee with his open hand, leaned his head back, and gave a great, bellowing laugh. Buhammei half-rose from his chair,

his face flushed, his hands clutching the arms, as if he had been offered an unforgivable insult. Then, he bit his lip, and waited for the American to speak.

"Listen, Mr. Buhammei," said the consul, resuming his natural air, but still looking amused. "It's impossible — absolutely impossible!"

The Moor appeared amazed.

"First," the Honorable Bob continued, "the family don't count with me, nohow; it's always the man himself. Second, the money ain't no good, because I've got more than she or me or any man she might marry, or all of us put together, could ever spend. And, next, you can bet your boots that I wouldn't let her marry you, or any other dark-skinned man, if he was the last one on earth."

Buhammei sprang to his feet with his face ashen and drawn, but the consul again waved him back, and drawled in his slow, easy voice.

"Hold on, now! Hold on! Don't get excited. I don't want to hurt your feelin's, you know, but I've got to make myself plain. I've got to hand it to you from the shoulder, so's you won't have any misunderstandin's about anything. Just wait till I get through talkin', won't you?"

Buhammei glared at the speaker, as if he could not understand, and then, appearing to think that perhaps the big American was some new kind of species with which he was unacquainted, dropped back, tense and waiting.

"I ain't got nothin' against dark-skinned men," the Honorable Bob continued, "and there's a lot of 'em

I admire and like; but I don't believe in mixin' up people whose complexions don't match fairly well. Marriage is like makin' a good team of hosses; they have to look alike and be gaited alike, and keep their heads turned together in the same direction all the time, or, in the end, they don't get nowhere except to the open market, and after that they ain't no team. I've never played a black and a white span for favorites as roadsters. But, just the same, I'm not tellin' you this to make you think I don't respect you and believe you're just what you say you are, a man of good family and with plenty of means."

Buhammei, as though not quite comprehending the homely synonyms, and believing that there was still ground for adjustment, stared at the consul in perplexity.

"You make a grave mistake," he said, slowly. "You do not understand. I offer your daughter an honorable position — and more, I can aid you in your own ambitions. I shall have influence that will enable you to gain all the things you have worked for."

The consul smiled, but said nothing, and shook his head at the hopelessness of making his visitor understand.

Buhammei's face darkened.

"I take it that you have no objections to my faith and —"

"Yes, I have! If you want to know more, and want to have your feelin's hurt, I'll tell you, once for all, I have got objections to your religion. Why, do you think I'd let my girl, my little Charlie, that I've been

father and mother to, that I've brought up to be loved and petted, put into a den like a beast, with a half-dozen other women — any one of whom would be equal to her whether — ? Oh, hell! What's the use in talkin' about it? You can't have her. That settles it!"

Buhammei, even then, could have withdrawn gracefully, and have retained a measure of friendly, or at least neutral, ground; but he was inflamed by the last thrust, and was losing his temper. The fanatical sense of superiority that every Mussulman feels over those of other religions, which he had curbed for the sake of his own present desires, led him to retort.

"I admit my faith and a belief in it; but, even then, I might agree to take no other woman, or —"

He was interrupted again, and with more annoyance:

"All that cuts no ice. I'm tellin' you, once for all, that there ain't any Moor livin' who is good enough to marry my daughter, or any other American girl."

Buhammei was on his feet, quivering with anger. A step was heard outside on the verandah, which neither noticed. The Honorable Bob didn't get up, but looked sternly at the Moor, and sat watching for him to go.

"I met your daughter in Paris," Buhammei said, "and I determined to have her. I can take her whether you want me to, or not."

The consul was getting to his feet now, with a deliberation that any who knew him would have regarded as menacing.

But the Moor rushed on without realization.

"It made no difference to me that she went about

unchaperoned in Paris — a thing which is against all European ethics — ”

A big form shot forward with a furious jump, and a snarling “Ah-h!” There was a sharp smack, and the consul’s fist struck Buhammei full in the mouth, knocking him back as if thrown through the air, to fall crumpled at the foot of one of the columns dividing the apartment. The Westerner stood quivering, and his hand fumbled around his hip, where in other years he had carried a more deadly arbiter of disputes. He seemed about to jump again, to rain blows on the Moor, who was dizzily striving to regain his feet.

From the outer door, another figure leaped in, stopped in front of the consul, and held up both hands with palms open, barring the way. It was the kaid.

“Stop!” he entreated. “Stop!”

The consul thrust the general aside, but, small as he was, Clarke determinedly grappled with him.

“Stop, sir, I beg of you,” the kaid urged. “You forget yourself and your dignity. It isn’t worth while — it isn’t right. Stop, I say!”

The American hesitated, and halted with his hands clenching and unclenching, as if longing to strangle, his eyes like two sharp points of vicious light.

“Thanks,” he said at last, recovering himself. Then, he stretched a long, trembling finger at the visitor, who was wiping his face with his handkerchief.

“Buhammei, you scrub,” he said, and his voice had lost all of its old drawling tone, and was cold, hard and incisive, “you’ve got two things to be thankful for: first, that I don’t kill you — I’ve killed other men



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for less! — second, that the man my girl is engaged to be married to, Captain Dick Whitney, doesn't know what you've said, or he'd get you, if he had to follow and drag your heart out at the foot of an altar in one of your damned dirty mosques. Now, git! And, if ever you come here again, if ever you speak to my daughter, or to me, I'll finish what I started to do. I will — by God, I will!"

The Moor turned, and, with a look of unspeakable insult and unforgiving hatred, walked out to the verandah. In passing, his eyes swept over the kaid with a world of malevolence, yet there was nothing in his going to betoken fear. The consul stepped after, and watched until the man had passed through the gate, then called to the porter at the entrance. "That man is never to be admitted here again!"

Still glaring and with his eyebrows drawn into a heavy scowl, the American whirled on his heels, and looked at Kaid Hamilton Clarke, who was leaning with his back against the wall, his face very white, and holding behind him his hands, the nails of his fingers dug deeply into the palms. The two men looked squarely into each other's eyes, and the consul's expression changed to one of perplexity.

"Why — why, what's the matter, boy?" he asked, solicitously. "He didn't hurt you, did he?"

"No, Mr. Marshall," the kaid answered, slowly drawing his arms out, and pulling himself together. "He didn't hurt me. I'm — I'm — all right! Only a bit under the weather, I think. I'm — I'm —" He stopped, and did not finish, but walked over to a chair,

grown suddenly less buoyant and appearing mysteriously aged. He dropped back into the seat listlessly, and fixed his eyes on the tile at his feet, while the Honorable Bob lifted his eyebrows, and stared anxiously. The kaid made another effort to speak, moistened his lips, and then, in his usual level voice, remarked: "Ah, I didn't know that Miss Charlotte and the captain were betrothed. Really, must congratulate them. Fine girl, that! Fine fellow — very worthy fellow, I'm sure, quite sure!"

The Honorable Bob dragged a chair out to the verandah, fumbled in his pocket for a cigar, lighted it with fingers that still trembled, lifted his long legs up until his boot-heels rested on the marble rail, and then expressed his opinion in emphatic terms of Buhammei and everything Moorish, from the boat landing at Tangiers to the Sultan's delays. He had no response from the quiet figure at his side, and, when he peered in that direction in the deepening twilight, he saw that the adventurer — the general of an army, the trusted confidant of the Sultan, the most powerful factor in the affairs of Morocco — was leaning forward dejectedly like a broken, hopeless man, with his elbows on his knees and his chin resting on his clasped hands. Moreover, the American half-surmised that nothing of what he had been saying had penetrated to the mind of Kaid Hamilton Clarke, whose eyes were gazing fixedly out into hopeless spaces, where all was suddenly blank and uninviting. And simple, guileless, honest man that he was, "good old Bob Marshall," of the wide, free ranges

of a far West, never suspected that he had inflicted this wound which had given the adventurer a sense of dull, sickening suffering, which nothing might alleviate, which was the foundation of despair.

CHAPTER TWELVE

WHEN the party returned, the kaid did not extend his congratulations, as he had said he would. They were tired, dust-covered, and seemed in no mood for talk. When they assembled for dinner, they had but little to say of the day's excursion. The Honorable Bob forebore to mention Buhammei, until they were again in the shadow of the verandah in the garden, where they invariably passed their evenings; then, he spoke in an unusually quiet voice.

"Girls," he said, "Buhammei isn't goin' to come here any more, and I don't think you'll care to speak to him if you meet him on the street."

Both gave a start, and looked at him inquiringly; but his set face expressed nothing.

"There's no use in my tellin' you all that was said, but he came here to get me to give him Charlotte, as a starter, I suppose, for his harem. He got ugly, and said things that don't go where all of us come from, so I threw him out. I don't think he'll come again, because I told him if he did —"

He paused, and Charlotte said:

"What did you tell him, father?"

"That I'd kill him," he drawled, as quietly as though making an ordinary statement.

Margaret Clarke looked at the consul in a puzzled

way. It was so hard to harmonize the quiet, kindly voice with the threat which, she felt, would be carried out ruthlessly if occasion arose.

"But I must send him back the trinkets he has given me," Charlotte interjected.

"I've already 'tended to that. Went up to your room, pawed your things over, made a bundle, and sent it by the boy at the door, with orders that he was to give 'em to Buhammei, or leave 'em at his hotel. He said he knew where he stopped. Now, I don't want any of you to ask any questions about what he said. He said enough, and that ends it."

This time, his voice was decisive, and forbade anything further. There was an awkward silence, broken finally by the kaid.

"Reminds me," he said. "Want to congratulate you, Miss Charlotte, on having a very honorable man for your future husband, and you Captain Whitney for — ah — ah —"

His stammering was so unusual that Dick looked up at him, saw that his face was working, and forthwith pitied him for his evident misery. The American officer did not see that the consul's daughter stared at the general for a moment, and then dropped her eyes. Without knowing why, Dick looked at Margaret Clarke, who sat calm and unmoved, as if the fact of the betrothal had been known to her before. He thanked the kaid for his expression, but his own voice sounded hollow and dead.

Charlotte was the first to speak.

"Why, I supposed you all knew of it," she said,

softly. "Anyway, I don't believe I ever even mentioned it to Margy. It has been such an accepted fact with dear old Dick and me for so many, many years that its novelty has been lost, and I—I suppose that is the reason we so seldom mention it."

Only once in her speech had her voice betrayed warmth, and that was in the halting intonation give to the term of affection for the officer. He noticed it, as did the kaid, and each felt an insistent flutter of emotion, although for entirely different reasons. The American thought he saw Margaret give a swift and sympathetic turn of the head toward her brother, a motion arrested as though she feared to look at him. An indefinable restraint had come over all save the Honorable Bob, who was contentedly puffing his cigar and staring up with half-closed eyes at the moonlight, filtering through the acacias and palms, and showering the still clusters of roses and beds of bordering flowers.

"The only thing that aggravates me about 'em," he said, addressing Kaid Hamilton Clarke and his sister, "is that they never set any date when they're goin' to get married. They keep just goin' so-so-in' along, and what I really want is for 'em both to be with me all the time."

"I can't blame you," the kaid said, slowly. "Everyone has a wish of the heart."

"That's just it! That's what I wanted to say, but couldn't," the consul asserted. "A wish of the heart! When I think it all over, it seems to me as if it's somethin' like that I've had in my mind for a good many years."

He warmed to his subject a little, and swung round in his chair until he faced toward the kaid and Margaret, who had slowly worked back until the cushion on which she was sitting had come to her brother's feet, and she rested her hand against his knees as if commiserating him by touch, although incapable of voicing her sympathy. Her intuition had read his wound.

"It seems a mighty long time ago," the consul went on, in an unusually gentle voice, "since her mother died. I don't talk about it very often, because — well, because it hurts. She was brought up in Tennessee, and her folks came west to Cheyenne, and — we married. She was the loveliest woman that God ever made; but she loved me, and we went out a mighty long ways from other folks to start our home. We didn't have nothin' but ourselves, and I was richer than I've ever been since in just havin' her. And when she went, and, sence then, I've always been poor, and will be till I die. Money ain't much good, nohow."

"She died when Charlotte was quite small, didn't she?" Margaret asked, gently.

"Yes, quite small," the consul said. "She'd been ill some time, but nobody thought it was serious and — God forgive me! — I didn't realize it. I was too busy tryin' to make money."

His voice sounded like bitter arraignment of himself.

"I'd been away for a month, and, when I came up the gulch leadin' to the cabin, I stood up in my stirrups, and gave a yell that she always knew. I was so happy to come back again that I couldn't hold myself; so spurred my horse until he tore up the trail, the rocks and

boulders flyin' back from his hoofs as if he'd thrown 'em. Always before when I called, she'd come out to meet me, runnin' down the hill, her face shinin' like the gates of heaven, and her feet dancin' little tunes; but this time no one came but Mischinakwa, the old squaw that worked on the place, and my heart grew cold, and was like somethin' dead inside."

He paused and leaned heavily back in his chair, his hands clasped before.

"Mischinakwa came out to meet me, and I jumped off, and threw the reins over my pony's head, so he wouldn't run away. She was a right-old squaw, and, like all of 'em, never showed nothin' in her face. 'What's the matter?' I asked, and I couldn't speak above a whisper.

"'Missus heap sick,' she answered. 'Morn'—that was her buck who worked round the place—'gone for doctor last night. No come back yet.'

"I ran on up to the cabin-door, where there were a lot of morning-glories, which she had planted, lookin' at me with big blue faces, and slipped inside. She was lying still and quiet-like. Charlie was sittin' on the floor with her toys. She jumped up, and ran to throw her tiny arms round me; but I put her back on the floor, and she stood there with her little mouth puckered up, and tears in her eyes, because she couldn't understand why I didn't take her up. Her mother had woke up, and turned toward me.

"'I knew I could wait, I knew I could wait till you came,' she said, and, when I got my arms back of her and held her up, she gave a great, big, tired sigh.

“ ‘Wait for what?’ I asked; but I knew the answer before she spoke.

“ ‘To say good-bye and God bless you, dear,’ she whispered, her breathin’ faint as a soft spring wind against my cheek.

“ I tried to think it wasn’t so — that I hadn’t never done nobody any harm, and aimed to do the square thing all my life, and that the Lord wouldn’t treat me that way when I hadn’t done nothin’ to deserve it. I hadn’t been a prayin’ man, but I sat there with my teeth shut and my eyes burnin’ like red-hot coals, and begged God not to take her away from me, to let her stay just a little longer, or to take me instead; but it wasn’t no use. I’d got there just in time. It was like she said; she’d been holdin’ on only to see me once more, and the fight had taken every ounce of strength she had left. She got her hand up, and kind of patted my cheek, while I whispered to her to be brave.

“ The shadow was comin’ through the cabin-window, and everything was still. Then, a cooin’ dove flew down on the roof, his feet soundin’ loud when he struck. I heard his wings beatin’ the air. I felt her give a long, long, tremulous sigh, and then she was still — very still. Charlie, with a baby certainty that somethin’ was wrong, had crept up to the foot of the rough old bed, and was lookin’ over it with her eyes wide and scared, and the undried tears on her cheeks. I laid her mother down out of my arms for the last time, easy, as if afraid I’d disturb her rest, and looked at her a long time. She wasn’t there any more — nothin’ was there but me, a white-faced little child and the dove that had slowly fluttered

down on to the window-ledge, and was mournin' and mournin' as if he wanted to tell us — me and the baby — that he knew, and had come to tell her good-bye."

The consul's voice was grown husky, and sounded like a sob bravely suppressed. Charlotte slipped over to him, and dropped into his lap, resting her head on the shoulder that had so tenderly pillowed her dying mother, and for a long minute there was silence. It was to those others as if to speak would be to profane a sanctuary of memory, and they waited for him to resume, wondering to what his story was leading.

"Well," he said at last, "I cursed myself for ever havin' left her side, and then I lived for the baby girl. I fought for her, I worked for her, I starved for her, and I made money for her. I gave her all I could give, and tried to be both father and mother, and to be a tenth as good as her mother had believed me, feelin' all the time that somewhere — somewhere out there beyond the stars and the sunlight and the clouds and the blue — she was watchin' me and smilin', and sometimes in the night by camp-fires I've heard her whisper, when the wind was low and sobbin': 'God bless you, dear'; and that made it worth while. Hearin' that once in a while kept me from gettin' desperate in my loneliness, and doin' a lot of things which I've known other and better men to do, when their hearts have been torn out to flutter and bleed in the dust of a mighty lonely world. It kept me believin' that there was another place where I'd see her again, and I've always wanted to go there, so I can look into her eyes without feelin' ashamed. Some folks want arguments to show 'em there's a heaven. I

don't, because I'm one of those fellers some calls fools, and am mighty happy to answer that the reason I know there's one is just because I know. It's enough. Heaven's where the woman you love is, if you're doin' the best you know how to make it so and to be worthy."

Again, the consul stopped, as if to think of the voices of the night, and, for some reason that none might know, Charlotte crept from his lap, and slowly walked out to the edge of the verandah, and seated herself on the steps where once Buhammei had sat, when telling the story of the Garden of Fate. She leaned her head back against the same pillar that had rested his head, and looked down at the stair over which his trembling fingers had passed while pointing out the spot where once a broken-hearted woman had gasped away her life. The kaid followed her with his eyes, but sat motionless and silent.

"I've had a good many things to make me happy since," the frontiersman continued, after an interval. "I've had Charlie, who was like her mother. I've had success. And I've had the wish of my heart. I picked up that boy, Dick. He wasn't much to look at — just a dirty-faced, freckled little cuss, that was barefooted when I first saw him, and had on a pair of patched pants that wouldn't have kept him out of jail for indecent exposure if he'd been a little older. He didn't have nothin' to recommend him, except a pair of big gray eyes that looked right square at you, and wa'n't afraid. He came up to me after I'd got to runnin' a good many outfits with the B. M. brand, and he wouldn't stand no guff

from the cooks or the cow-punchers. He said he wanted to talk to me. And so he got the chance.

"Do you remember, Dick, how you came buttin' up, and says, 'Hello! You're old Bob Marshall ain't you?' and then, when I answered 'yes,' said you'd come to get a job? How I asked you what job you wanted, and you said you thought you'd rather have the one I had, and be the owner; but that, if you couldn't get that, you was willin' to be foreman of an outfit? Do you remember it, Dick?"

The officer laughed for the first time in many days, but said nothing.

"Then — do you remember? — or at least, if you don't, I do — you said you was Widow Whitney's oldest boy, and wanted to get somethin' to do to take care of your other folks. I asked you what you meant by 'Widow Whitney,' and didn't know till then that your father had gone out. So, Dick came and lived with us, and — made good. Made good, I say, better'n I could have hoped! A pair of patched pants and a freckled face may hold a whole lot that's worth knowin.' A chestnut burr ain't a handsome thing, but it's got a heap of good inside. So, when Dick went away, and made good and came back, I knew the Widow Whitney needn't be ashamed of anything that was in him, or anything he'd ever do.

"I liked his lookin's, and I wanted to sort of keep him in the family. I told him so, and that the only way I could see was for him to marry Charlotte when she came back, and he took me up, providin' she was willin'. He wasn't nothin' but a kid, after all; and she wasn't,

either. So, we both asked her, and she said, 'Sure, father, if you want me to.' And I've been happy ever since. And they ain't seemed unhappy over it, and so it was that, when that pup Buhammei — lookin' like what down south they call a nigger — asked me for her today as if she were a pony in a corral, I boiled over a considerable amount, and lost my temper for the first time in more'n twenty years.

"I've told you all this, Hamilton, because I like you, and want you to like me. I've told it to you, because I don't want you to think, without understandin' all about it and what it's all been to me and what it all means to me, that I'd kill a man who dirtied me and mine by his speech. He said he'd take her. I stood that, laughin' up my sleeve, because there ain't nothin' but God himself that can take from old Bob Marshall the thing that fills his heart and makes his life worth livin', without his consent. I tried to keep the bit in my teeth. I did, until he said a thing which sounded to me like an insult. And, then — my explainin' has become like a confession that a Catholic makes to a good priest, and which is drawn out of a sorrowin' mind — I wanted to kill him like I would a timber wolf. Now that I've cooled down and can think and see things very plain, I'm mighty glad I didn't have my gun. When I reached for it and found it wasn't there over the callous spot where I've carried it so much, I swore. I'm goin' to tell you more, and thank you for keepin' me from bein' what I'm not — when my forehead is cool, and the blood ain't pumpin' through me like streams of fire — a man who kills a feller that ain't heeled. I'm tellin' you this because I'll

admit that, when you grabbed me today and hung on, was startin' for that black-faced dog, intendin' to grab him by the throat, and hold it till I was quite sure that he never could come to again. This garden holds me and mine — my friends and all I've got in all the world that I don't want touched, looked at, or spoken of, by anybody that isn't all true, that don't ring like the noise of pure gold when it's tried on a tester's piece of steel. I say, I was about to make a mistake, and that I'm ashamed of it now, and that I was when you held me off; that I've tried to hobble that disposition of mine, which ran headlong when I was a youth, so's when I go to another place where I won't be tempted and where there isn't anything to make a man a fool, I can go without reproach."

His tone was that of contrition when he closed, but it sounded full, sonorous and sincere. The kaïd realized now that something had been told him of a strangely virile life which he would never have heard under other circumstances. Knowing his own repressions, he felt a strange warming of love for the grim old figure that had suffered so much, borne so much, striven so hard, and was yet fighting for all that he believed to be the best. It was — and the listeners realized the fact — the unlocking of a rarely opened chamber in a heart that had great stores of love and longing, and was filled with impetuous impulses, crude perhaps, but always vital.

They felt awed by its disclosures. They knew that something sacred had been given them, that in the homely unbosoming of this grim old man they had listened to a tale never before told, which was as hallowed

and inviolate to him as must have been the Holy Grail to those who followed the quest unfalteringly to the end. Furthermore, they who sat there, hopelessly intertwined in a complexity of cross-purposes and misunderstandings, felt that their own griefs and desires were embryonic in comparison with this master love, which had been tried by infinite sorrow and weary years, yet had never been hesitant or faltering.

The kaid got up abruptly, and said he must return to the palace. He stepped first of all to the Honorable Bob, and shook hands, warmly. He kissed his sister on the forehead, and looked up at the American officer as he said good-night; and then, like a man bidding a long good-bye, he halted before the consul's daughter, and slowly, quite slowly, put out his fingers. Her own dropped into his, and they stood quietly, he on the lowest step, lifting his eyes to hers, and she looking down at him. It was if they had a great and mutual comprehension, and for the first and last time were standing with nude thought to be read and remembered after the gates of the mind were irrevocably closed. He tried to speak, but his words died away into half-uttered sounds. Each knew that they would meet again day by day, but that this was their farewell.

And out at the end of the verandah, where a tall, white column was rendered chill and beautiful by the thin, pallid glitter of the moon, Dick Whitney stood; and he believed that he alone of all those in the Garden of Fate was unworthy, that he alone had it in his power by sacrifice to bring happiness to all.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

EITHER a strange coincidence or a veiled intent made it imperatively necessary that Kaid Hamilton Clarke should take to the field immediately after he learned that the consul's daughter and the American officer were betrothed. He made the announcement on the following morning.

"Going tomorrow," was the terse opening.

"Where?" Charlotte and his sister asked in unison.

"Out there," he answered, waving his hand indefinitely toward the distances of the interior. "Afraid there's trouble brewing. Want to know what it is. Can't trust anyone but myself to find out. Berbers more restless."

"Hamilton," his sister asked anxiously, "is there any danger there, now?"

"Neither there nor here at present," he replied. "But what I want to do is to forestall danger."

Dick Whitney had been tramping backward and forward on the tiled space at the foot of the verandah, and apparently had not heard the conversation; but, now, he halted with one foot on the lowest step, and looked up at the kaid.

"I'm afraid I shall have to trouble you to tell me what I want in the way of an outfit?" he said.

Clarke looked at the speaker questioningly, and seemed slightly surprised.

"You are still intent on going?"

"Why, certainly; unless you have changed your mind, and don't want me."

The kaid looked embarrassed for the fraction of a second and at a loss for words.

"No, I haven't changed, but — well, we'll talk it over later," he replied, with a quick glance at Charlotte. Then, he diverted the conversation by asking his sister if she had received any letters from home.

Dick watched her face as she hesitated to reply, and wondered what answer she would make. He expected an evasion, knowing the pledge of secrecy that had been laid on her by the peer, but he was to be given another insight into her character. She looked directly at her brother with her candid eyes, and with no change in her level brows.

"Yes, Hamilton, I have; but I can't show you the letter, nor tell you anything that is in it."

"Well, upon my word! What is the matter? Am I no longer in the family confidence? Why, that's the first letter the old boy ever wrote that wasn't directed to us both, if we happened to be together."

"Ah," she said slowly, "that's just the reason you can't see this one."

The kaid was perplexed, and his face showed it; but he said nothing more, and then, at last, put an arm around his sister's waist, and said:

"Well, dear old chum, there is no need to tell me anything unless you want to; but I'll have to write and let the big brother know what I think of his selfishness, and try to find a secret that you and I can have alone, so that I can be revenged."

He strolled idly into the interior of the house, and examined the weapons on the wall for the hundredth time, but without any seeming abatement of interest, then sauntered back out to the verandah. Dick had betaken himself to a longer round, and was tramping to and fro between the flower-beds when the kaid joined him.

"Captain," the general said, "I want to tell you something I couldn't say a few minutes ago, while my sister was with us. There is a chance that this expedition of mine will be very dangerous. There is a chance that I shall go farther than I had originally planned. I didn't want to alarm Margaret, but I want you to know how it stands."

Dick stopped abruptly, with a set face.

"Ah, you believe that I am afraid of danger, perhaps."

The kaid appeared hurt.

"No, I have never thought that. I know you too well, believe me, to question your courage; but on your safety depends another's happiness."

The American looked at the speaker with a more friendly scrutiny.

"You forget that you are in the same position," he said. "You and I both know Miss Margaret places some valuation on your life."

"True; but my mission is in the line of duty."

"And mine, also. I am over here to study foreign cavalry methods. I choose to observe those of Morocco, provided His Majesty's general of cavalry will permit me."

The kaïd relaxed enough to smile slightly, and they stood scrutinizing each other, but neither understanding the other in the least. The kaïd did not suspect the turmoil of mind into which the captain had been drawn, and the captain, blinded by his own troubles, did not believe the Englishman burdened with any perturbation.

"You did me the honor to say once that you would be glad to have some one with you whom you could trust. I have done nothing, I hope, to make you change your liking?" the American spoke with direct interrogation.

"No, I shall be glad to have you go with me," Clarke answered. "But I shall not want you to run into danger."

"I'm not seeking suicide."

The kaïd smiled openly, and then in detail told the American what would be needed in the way of outfit, and suggested that for the purpose of the expedition it would be better to adopt Moorish costume. With a great relief that he was to have action of some kind and an opportunity to get away from himself, Dick suggested that they go out and buy the necessary garments, and together they left the garden, after explaining their mission to the two girls who were still on the verandah.

For the first time since they had known each other, Charlotte and Margaret were mutually depressed. The consul's daughter, whose smiling lips were usually opened in quick speech, free laughter or careless song, sat with a magazine in her lap, her hands dropped over the open pages, her eyes troubled and abstracted. A pathetic little droop had come to sadden the lines of her mouth, and she was listless. The stately English girl,

whose intense calm was always most noticeable, had grown even more quiet, but without conveying her customary sense of repose.

And yet, Margaret was extending to her friend a great sympathy, feeling that, if she were about to bid good-bye to the man who held her affections and had given his in return, she, too, would watch for the hour of parting with dread. She did not believe her brother's statement, that there was no peril in the trip; for she knew that under no circumstances would he have told her had there been. She, better almost than he himself, had read his attitude toward Charlotte, and knew that the revelation of the previous day had inflicted a sickening wound. She was not quite sure that she understood Americans, the strange, buoyant, careless race that spoke the tongue of the mother-land from which it had long been weaned, the race that was so like, and yet so unlike, the English in appearance, custom and thought; the race that to the English mind must always present a riddle of complexity. She was being driven to the conclusion by all she had seen that it was due to a lack of reverence; but with this thought came the remembrance of the quaint, crude Westerner, so anxious to "make good," so out of place in a diplomatic service; yet bearing an affection and sorrow that had lasted for so many years, an affection that would remain steadfast undoubtedly to the end of his life. It could not be that in him was anything less than a reverence so profound as to be too sacred for words. She remembered the halting sentences, the throb in the voice and the tightly clutched hands when he told for the first time of the loss of his

wife. It must be, she reasoned, that the daughter was like the father, and, although speaking from the heart but seldom, had depths into which others might rarely gaze, depths like those still, shadowy places in pools where the surfaces give no hint of what lies below ; only, dance, ripple and glitter in the sunlight.

"Hello!" a big, hearty voice called. "Where's everybody?"

The consul approached with a huge bundle in his arms, his silk hat on the back of his head, his forehead beaded with perspiration from what must have been a long walk.

"A forlorn portion of everybody is here," Charlotte answered as he came up the steps, dropped his bundle, removed his hat, and mopped his forehead with a huge handkerchief. "The other portion has gone shopping."

"Shopping, eh? Well, that's just what I've been doin'. And, say, I've got some real souvenirs for my two girls—you really are my girl, ain't you, little Margaret Clarke? Lord bless the pair of you! Now, you see, it was like this: I'd been over to see a friend of mine who runs one of the jails, and, as I came out into a courtyard, an old feller with a long beard, who is kind of a Sultan's auctioneer, was goin' on about the rare prizes he had to offer from a sheik, whose possessions had been grabbed, when he got caught in a conspiracy and had to leave between daylight and dark with a few hundred soldiers chasin' him and his family. So, I bought some right nice, interestin' things for you two."

He squatted down over his bundle, pulled out a huge, worn knife, and cut the cords that bound it. Then, as

he began unwrapping many folds of coarse paper, he went on:

"Packed it home myself. Wouldn't trust anybody to tote it for me. Now, you two just keep back there. I spanked Charlie once for bein' too curious, and I don't want to have to lam you, Margaret, because you're too big."

The English girl forgot her troubles, and laughed heartily. Charlotte smiled, and drew her chair farther away, as if seeking safety. Presently, the consul dragged out the first package. From it, he took two gorgeously beautiful blouses, such as are worn by favorites of princely harems, laden with embroidery of seed pearls and coral in different colors, tinkling with tiny pendants of gold, and catching the light from their velvet depths.

"There's one for each of you," he said, tossing the garments to the two girls, who examined them with exclamations of delight.

Two pairs of tiny embroidered slippers followed, and then he fumbled at another wrapping.

"Now, what do you think of them?" he asked, holding up and shaking a pair of balloon-like drawers, to match the blouses he had first presented. "Them pants," he said with great dignity, "was worn by the Princess Nal-al-Ouaguennoun — or something like that. I get it mixed up sometimes, and she was a beaut! The old feller that sold 'em told me so. Two pairs of 'em, just alike."

The girls were bubbling over with laughter. He observed it with amazement.





"Well, what's the matter? You don't have to wear 'em, nor nothin' like that, you know. I thought you'd like 'em for souvenirs."

They caught the tone of disappointment in his voice, and hastened to assure him that they did appreciate them, whereat his face slowly cleared up.

"Now," said he with boyish delight in voice, "here comes the real things you can wear. Here's where I got excited, busted myself, and had to draw on the banks out home for money enough to square up. These ain't alike; so you'll have to draw straws, or cut cards, to tell who gets which."

He opened a flat box, and stood erect between the girls, holding in either hand two magnificent necklaces of oriental pearls, one joined by deep glowing rubies, the other by diamonds that sparkled and gleamed in the light. Priceless gems, suggesting oriental splendor, which had probably been heirlooms for centuries, were included in their fabrication, and Margaret, a connoisseur and amateur collector, gave a gasp.

"You — bought — these?" she said, standing beside him, and looking at them with her fine chin lifted and her hands clasped behind her, as if to touch them would be a sacrilege. "Why, they're worth a fortune! They are worthy of a crown collection! If you paid their value, you have bankrupted yourself, I fear!"

"Bankrupt nothin'! What's the good of bein' a millionaire if you can't spend your money the way you want to, buyin' things for people you love? Charlie ain't got much junk of that sort, and I ain't seen you wearin' none. You girls ought to wear 'em — wear

'em everywhere, on the street, in the bazaars, at breakfasts, so's to keep up the dignity of the American consulate, and show these folks over here that the two best girls I know in all the world are there with the trimmin's when they want to be. You ain't goin' to tell me you don't want 'em, after I've stood around and bid against a lot of Jews from the Mullah, who buy these things to make a profit on, and who kept runnin' 'em up on me till I got sore, and took their breath away by swearin' I'd have 'em on my girls' necks if I had to bid more than all Morocco was worth? You ain't goin' to do that, are you?"

Almost in tears, the English girl held the nearest necklace which he thrust into her hand, but, instead of looking at the jewels, she stared up at him. She had discovered a new trait of character in the grim old man, who had turned toward his daughter and thrown his arm around her neck, pulling her toward him with an awkward, affectionate gesture. He suddenly thought of something, and, as if fearing that he was leaving Margaret out, put his other arm round her waist, and drew her also into his embrace, beaming fondly on each of them. He leaned over, and kissed each on the forehead, released them, kicked the wrappings out of the way with his boot, and turned aside.

"That's all money's good for," he drawled, in a little softer tone than he had used hitherto; "something to show sometimes what's in the heart, when the tongue is hobbled and can't speak."

He beckoned to the gardener, and resumed his natural manner.

"There, boy," he ordered, "take this darn rubbish away, so it won't litter up the back yard."

The Arab did so, deftly gathering the wrappings into a bundle, and at the same time glancing furtively at the strings of jewels which the two girls were examining. His Oriental love for gems displayed itself in the covetous glitter of his eyes. Without realizing it, they had made a dangerous exhibition of their wealth.

"What kind of shoppin' are Dick and the kaid doin'?" the consul asked suddenly, as if for the first time remembering their absence.

As if they, too, had recalled something unpleasant, the girls' faces clouded.

"They are going away in the morning," Charlotte



said; "out to some place that the kaid says he wants to learn more about — where there seems to be disaffection. And Dick is going with him."

The consul gave a low whistle.

"They are out buying garments for Dick to wear, as the kaid thinks it best for him to go clad like a Moor."

"Dick's bound to go, eh?" The American looked at his daughter keenly.

"Yes; says it is his duty — that he is here to study cavalry methods."

The Honorable Bob dropped his eyes to the tile, and appeared to be weighing something in his mind. He looked again at Charlotte.

"Here, girl," he said, "come over here, and sit down."

She crossed, and seated herself on the arm of his chair, still looking worn and distressed.

"Don't you mind it, little pal," he went on, putting his arm round her, and patting her shoulder. "A soldier's a soldier, and a duty's a duty. When a government educates and pays a man for workin' for it, he's got to give the best that's in him, or else he's a common scrub. Dick's right. So, don't worry about it."

"But they may encounter danger."

He did not notice the "they"; but Margaret Clarke looked at her friend gratefully.

"Don't mind that. Either of the boys is big enough to take care of himself."

The consul assumed a clumsy and unconvincing hilarity.

"You just run along up to the house, and leave word that, when Dick gets back and tries on his new clothes, we want to see how he looks. Maybe, he's there now."

Charlotte got up rather wearily, and walked away, her step seeming to have lost something of its old time lightness, and he watched her going with a perturbed look.

"Somethin's the matter with her," the consul said to Margaret. "I can 'most always tell, or used to. I guess she ain't feelin' right peart. Yes, sir, when she was no higher than that"—he held out a hand measuring a point above the floor—"I could tell. She was different then, and used to sit in my lap, and tell me all about how she'd lost the rag dolls I used to make, or how she was lonely for some other little girls to play with." He stopped thoughtfully, and then said, as if in a burst of great confidence: "Why—do you know?—she never even had the belly-ache that she didn't come round and tell me all about it, and then I used to feed her with peppymint drops."

A servant came, bringing word that neither of the officers had returned, and that Charlotte had decided to write letters, which must be got off by the next mail. The English girl sat and listened to the consul's kindly drawl as he expatiated on the virtues of the American captain, and philosophized on life, his voice getting lower and slower as he talked, while the afternoon shadows crept over the place, until at last he leaned his head peacefully back against his chair, and went into a sound sleep. Margaret then attempted to read, but again dropped the magazine by her side, and tried to grasp the subtle, intangible unrest that had come over

her, and to read aright the reason why her heart had suddenly halted when she first learned that her brother and Dick Whitney were going away together. Somehow, she felt as if the terrors of danger had been doubled in an incomprehensible way.

Inside the room where she had ostensibly gone to write letters, the American girl was sobbing on a couch, her long, wavy blond hair tangled across her shoulders, and her face pillowed in her arms, trying as best she might to fight out the most trying battle of her life, and feeling very much alone. As the afternoon wore away, she resolved that for the happiness of her father, Dick Whitney and herself, she must be guarded whenever she again met Hamilton Clarke, and, at most, show nothing beyond a casual friendship. She sternly accused herself of ingratitude, not realizing that love is a master which is never mastered, which insidiously breaks all barriers, and eternally holds the citadel it conquers, or leaves it forever echoing hollowly to the sounds of tender and never-forgotten things.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

DICK felt like a boy in a masquerade costume when, according to the consul's demands, he donned his Moorish garb after dinner, and sauntered out into the garden where the others awaited him. His heelless boots reminded him of the moccasins of his frontier days, but the loose and cool folds of his plain white burnous, his voluminous trousers and the purple girdle were curious vestments. He would be glad to go, he thought, as he paused for a moment in a deep shadow, and looked down the dim aisles leading to the inner heart of the little square. It all appeared the same as when he had first seen it, yet everything had changed. There was the same white moonlight, so bright that one could have read a newspaper in its still radiance, the same motionless trees, the same heavy fragrance of blooming flowers, and out beyond, through the massed acacias, the springing rush of water from the fountain, changing colors at intervals and always harmonious. But, in the weeks passed in Fez, his placidity of mind had been deeply ruffled, and everything in his orbit upset by a new discontent, which, fight as he might, could not be conquered.

He walked slowly onward to the foot of the verandah. The Honorable Bob greeted him with a loud laugh of derision. Charlotte smiled at him, the kaid congratulated him, and Margaret calmly studied him as he stood

before them, appearing of immense proportions, and carrying his red fez in his hand by the long silken tassel.

"You look almost like a Moor, Dick," the consul asserted. "With your big eyes, big nose and whole get-up, I wouldn't want to meet you alone in the desert, after you get a few days' tan on your face. Say, I'd take to the brush, or hold up my hands and ask what ransom you wanted. I would, so help me!"

"He doesn't look very easy to handle, does he?" the kaïd said. "He looks like Abdul-Assiz, the swordsman."

"And can beat him, I'll bet ten to one," the consul asserted. "Don't s'pose you ever heard that he's a champion with everything from a saber to a rapier, did you? Well, he just is."

"Hardly the champion," Dick protested, while the Englishman looked at him with a new interest.

"Ah, but you have so many medals and things!" Charlotte insisted. "They were all given you for something, weren't they?"

"Yes, but I could have won them for picking up potatoes just as well, if I had been quicker on my feet," the American answered, seating himself on the step beside Charlotte, who looked up at him fondly. "It might have proven a more useful accomplishment."

They were interrupted by one of the servants, who came toward them, carrying a tray on which were the brass still and small coffee-cups that are everywhere found in Morocco. He came clumsily, as if unused to his task, and Charlotte noted it.

"Two of the house-servants are ill today," she said,

"so we are utilizing the gate-porter. Doesn't he do it awkwardly, though!"

She moved to one side, and the man brought his burden, deposited it, and then drew a tabaret to the center of the group, on which he placed the tray. Obeying an order, he returned to the mansion, and got a taper with which to light the lantern in the verandah, reaching up with his long arm, and standing on his tiptoes as he did so. Charlotte watched him curiously, and suddenly stared at him a little more closely. In his efforts, a fold of his garment had been lifted aside, exposing a clasp at his girdle, which would not otherwise have been seen. The consul, noticing her, leaned forward, looked and then frowned heavily.

"Here!" he said in his broken Arabic. "Come here!"

The man stood before him, motionless, imperturbable and waiting.

"Where did you get that thing?"

He put out his fingers, lifted a fold, and pointed at the clasp.

The man frowned at him resentfully for an instant, and then, under the directness of the consul's interrogating eyes, dropped his lids.

"Isn't that one of the trinkets you were told to return to Buhammei? Aren't you the man who said you knew where his hotel was, and didn't you take him the bundle?"

The Arab looked confused, and then muttered his answer.

"It is the one, your excellency," he admitted. "I

have all the others. I have not found him yet. I will give them to him when I do."

"Did you try?" the consul insisted, coldly.

"I did, your excellency; but he had gone — had left in the night, and they knew not when he would return. They will tell me when he does."

"Where has he gone?"

The Arab did not answer, but stood looking sullenly at his feet.

"Don't know, eh?"

The man shook his head.

"Well, you just bring those things to me, and I'll keep them till you hear that he has come back. You should have told me before."

The servant bowed, and walked away to gather together the presents, which Buhammei, before he had disappeared from their knowledge, had made to Charlotte. The kaid had been sitting quietly, watching the Arab's face, and listening. When the man had left, he turned to the consul.

"Permit me to talk to him when he comes again," he said. "My Arabic is better, I think, than yours."

"Sure!" the Honorable Bob assented. "Say anything you like to him. Wish you would. He wanted to steal that stuff, and hasn't said a word all these weeks since he got his hooks on to the bundle. I'll fire him."

"No, not until we know more," the kaid said. "It might be useful to have him kept near us."

The Arab returned with all the gifts. The kaid spoke to him in flawless and fluent Arabic, and in the manner of a man accustomed to obedience and respect,

the power of his position being sufficient to awe the man if he were a culprit.

"Why didst lie to his excellency?" he began, abruptly. "Answer me with the truth, or I'll have the bastinado flipping across the soles of thy naked feet."

For the first time, the Arab cringed. The kaid slowly arose to his feet, and stepped over until he was directly in front of the servant, and his jaws were set fiercely, and his eyes were hard.

"Take care that thy tongue does not falter," he admonished. "Now, answer me! Thou knowest that he they call Buhammei has gone out into the wastes?"

"No," the Arab hesitated.

The kaid drew a tablet from his pocket, and commenced to write.

"The bastinado shall teach thee the truth," he said, grimly. "If thou startest to run, I'll kill thee myself, and send thee to the Prophet with a lie on thy lips."

The Arab looked at the general tremulously, and then dropped to his knees.

"Have patience, Kaid Hamilton," he implored.

Clarke stopped writing, and looked at the suppliant.

"Well," he said, "out with it, then. Thou knewest Buhammei had gone?"

"Not until I went to his abode, to return him the jewels. Then, I learned it; but for what reason, I swear I know not, nor could they tell me."

Clarke stared down thoughtfully, but still held the tablet in his hands. The American officer was leaning far round him, to get a better view, and the consul sat grimly enjoying the kaid's method.

"But thou knowest where he went?"

'Again, the man stammered; and, again, the kaid began to write.

"Yes, yes! They told me he had gone to Taflet, on the edge of the desert; but for what, they knew not."

The kaid appeared perplexed, and anxious to learn more.

"Thou knewest his name was not Buhammei?" he asked, hoping to lead the man into some betrayal of knowledge.

"He was so called, and I know not his other name."

"Nor his business?"

"Yes. A collector of antiquities, which he markets across the water in the cities of the unbelievers."

The kaid studied the porter's face for a moment, and then slowly slipped the tablet back into his pocket, and turned toward his seat.

"Get up!" he said. "But, hereafter, discipline thy tongue, if thou would'st preserve thy head. Go!"

The Arab arose, bowed deeply, and hurried away through the gloom, the others waiting for him to get beyond earshot before speaking.

"You act powerful suspicious of Buhammei," the consul said, looking at the kaid.

"I am. And I am glad to know where he has gone, for he escaped from surveillance."

"Why, who do you think he is? The Arab boy says he was a dealer in curiosities," Charlotte said, in some surprise.

"That is not his occupation, I have ascertained," Clarke answered. "But, so far, we have been at a loss

to learn what it can be. We have reason to believe that he is an agent for smuggled arms, which he has been selling to the Berbers and the other half-rebels."

"Ho, ho!" the consul exclaimed. "So, that's the how, is it? Well, it's a mighty good riddance to bad rubbish, ain't it, to have him so far away that he can't get any more?"

"Yes," the kaid assented slowly; "unless he himself is connected more closely with the insurgents than as an intermediary, which I doubt. I rather believe that he fled in that direction to hide himself, because they would give him refuge, keep him lying under cover until some time had passed, and then help him to get out of the country, to where he could again become their agent. Unless —"

He stopped, and looked grave.

"Unless," he resumed after a long moment, "they have already succeeded in getting weapons enough for their needs."

They sat quietly for a moment, and each looked engrossed in thought. Charlotte was the first to speak.

"You told me," she said earnestly, "there would be but little danger on the trip you are going to make, and yet you admit there is a chance that an insurrection may come at any time, even while you are out there — admit that perhaps the rebellious tribes already have arms!"

The kaid twisted a trifle in his seat. Her words had carried a reproach, or a suggestion that he had not been entirely candid.

"I didn't mean to say the trip was absolutely without some danger," he said, in self-defense. "There's

always danger in Morocco. It wouldn't be Morocco otherwise; but I do not think there is any imminent danger, or that, if there be, we could not make our way back. I feel sure there will be no uprising of any sort, until some man makes pretense to the throne, or declares a holy war, or does some other thing equally noticeable. In this country, they have as leaders men who always do a certain amount of loud talking before they act. They have to do the heroics first. They are not advanced enough in our style of civilization to know the wisdom of striking first and talking afterward."

"But this might be an exception!"

He laughed softly.

"The Berbers might come quickly and in force."

"Yes, but not likely."

"They might break loose while you and Dick are over in their country."

"We don't go as far as the Atlas, or the desert. We go for a short distance only. Oh, you needn't worry, Miss Marshall, I shall bring our friend back safe!"

The girl looked at the American, who stared at his feet, and then out into the garden. Unknown to the others, the conversation, as far as he was concerned, was taking an embarrassing turn. He wanted to escape from it, and stood up.

"Don't worry about me, little chum," he said lightly, looking at Charlotte. "I've what we used to call a hunch that nothing is going to hurt me, just yet."

He looked out to where the moon was just lifting itself above the wall of the garden, and then he slowly

stepped down to the path. Margaret arose and followed him, making some light remark regarding the night, and they two sauntered slowly away, leaving the consul questioning the kaid, and Charlotte sitting in the chair that the American had vacated. Dick was sorry, yet glad, that Margaret had chosen to accompany him. He would have preferred being alone for a time on this,



the last night of his stay in Fez, for he had resolved to depart immediately after his return from the desert, and to find some place where he would be so busy that he might forget what he regarded as his own waywardness of affection. But, on the other hand, he had longed more than he knew for an hour alone with the girl who had made him doubt himself, and he had resolved, as other men from the beginning of mankind have resolved, that this should be the last time. She talked carelessly, her mellow contralto sounding deep and musical, and he

answered in monosyllables, as they paced the length of the garden to the wall, where tradition said the rope-ladder had been suspended, back past the cottage to the farther end, and then through a by-path to a pergola that stood with shining white columns in the midst of an open glade, surrounded by a lawn. The ivy clinging and twining up the soft whiteness, the limpid gurgle of a tiny fountain near at hand, where a stone boy leaned far over and poured water from a lily into the depths of a pool, the suppressed twittering of a nightingale, and the heavy perfume of flowers, were all part of the somnolent hour in which he was to suppress all emotions, and bid good-bye to the most disturbing period of his life. He dropped wearily and in a careless attitude to the marble seat surrounding the heart of the pergola, and Margaret, still commenting on many things, fingered a leaf of ivy, the polished face of which caught the glitter of the moon. Her splendidly rounded form, the poise of her head, the line of her face with the thin, straight nose and firm chin, and the slenderness of her hands, were all clearly displayed in the mellow, yet intense, light. His hungry eyes took in every detail, hoping to remember long after the moment had vanished and had been exiled from possibility of repetition.

The girl looked at him, caught his wistful expression, and seated herself, holding the broad green leaf in her fingers, and appearing suddenly serious in her change of mood.

"I fancy," she said, "that, at the last moment, you are sorry to be going — are sorry to leave the cool and beautiful garden for the hot stretches of the half-desert,

where everything is restless and lacks comfort for either mind or body. Why, the very air on it waves and trembles all the time when the sun shines, and the nights suggest creeping things — ghosts that come up from the sands, and waver over the land! Yes, I think you regret, now, that you have asked to accompany my brother."

"My request to go? No, not that, Miss Clarke. I have no regret for that."

"Ah, the melancholy Moor," she said, smiling at him and running her glance over his costume. "What can the captain of the American nation, the swordsman, the betrothed of a girl than whom there is none more charming, attractive and loyal, regret? What tragedy has he in his bosom that makes him so profoundly gloomy?"

Dick did not answer, and, as she looked at him, her own face lost its smile, and she sensed a misery that she could not quite grasp, an intangible something that told her of unhappiness concealed. She was sorry that she had spoken so lightly.

"I forgot myself, and spoke too familiarly," she said softly, leaning toward him, and meeting his eyes. "Pardon me."

"But I have nothing to reprove, nothing to pardon," he replied. "And, indeed, are we not at least sufficiently intimate to permit you to speak without thought, to say what you will to me? Are we not good friends?"

"Why, yes, I should hope so, Captain Whitney."

She looked away from him, as if the conversation had taken a turn too serious to suit her mood, and he, rebel-

lions, had an insane desire to reach over and clutch the slender white fingers, to ask her if there were no possibility of their ever being more to each other. Her next words checked any such vagrant impulse.

"It would, indeed, be a pitiable thing if I were not to feel friendship for one who is to become the husband of the girl I love, and who has really become my best friend. I think that that would be a calamity. I should grieve at the thought that, after you two were married, I might not come, when I am lonely and tired, to the house which shelters both, and be assured of a welcome from its master."

"Lonely and tired!" He picked up her words, and repeated them in such a tone of voice that, without thought, she turned her face toward him. He had leaned toward her as he spoke, the loose-flowing Arabic costume accentuating the military straightness of his squarely set shoulders. His hands, appearing dark against the whiteness of his garb, were clasped together between his knees. His repetition of the words conveyed to her a sharp sense of yearning, of desire to comfort, if that time of loneliness and weariness should ever come, and she drew back, still looking at him, but with parted lips. She gave a long breath, and then dropped her eyes to the leaf of ivy, which had fluttered from her relaxed fingers and lay, a dark spot on the marble floor, at her feet. She was annoyed at the quick leaping of her heart and the unexpected thrill of her pulses. She chose to render the conversation light.

"Of course," she said. "There is no woman in the world who does not have lonely and tired times. Some-

times, it's because she has had trouble with her dress-maker; sometimes, because her pet dog has transferred his affections to a distant groom, and fled from his kennel."

She laughed carelessly, and he drew back as if rebuffed.

"When I look at your Moorish dress," she went on, "I wonder whether the Arabs and the Moors do not have trouble with their milliners — or shall I say tailors? And I wonder again whether that is not the reason for their deep-seated melancholy. Yet, they always look well groomed."

"Oh I suppose so," he answered. "It is well for them if they have no more serious woes."

"Why, how tragic you are this evening! You are out of sorts, aren't you? Let us talk of — of —"

Her voice, in spite of her splendid self-control, had sounded pathetic, and she bit her lip, and frowned, as she stopped speaking.

"Ah, Miss Clarke," he said softly, "let us not try to assume something which, perhaps, we do not feel. We may go even further in this, our farce, where the lights are fluttering for the end, and the tired actors are aching for the drop; but it would be a hollow and unfitting end for your friendship and mine."

Margaret gasped sharply, and again leaned over, as if something had come before her eyes, and clouded their vision until she must come closer to him, to read his thought.

"The end — the end, Captain Whitney — of yours and my friendship? What have I done?"

"I do not expect to remain in Fez when I return," he answered, lamely. "It may be that we shall never again be thrown together in such a delightful way in — the Garden of Fate. I have not even the certainty of ever returning to Europe, after I once go back to America. The allurements of imagination are largely gone. It is quite possible, indeed, that, save for a few hours after my return from the coming expedition, we may not see each other again."

"Hardly," she responded. "It's not a world of distances, any more. Friends see each other nowadays if the friendship is sufficiently strong. I shall certainly want to see Charlotte many, many times after — after you have taken her away."

Dick could not be sure that her voice had faltered, or that her hesitancy was other than that of one seeking for words. He was angered at himself for questioning, yet he had a miserable, hungry desire to know whether she would grieve if they were never to meet in the future. Disciplined as were his emotions and his tongue, he dared not speak, lest in his torment he might say things that he would afterward regret. He was fully aware that one impetuous speech would cause her to lose any esteem she might entertain for him, and he admired her for it. He felt that to voice anything of his tumult would be dishonorable and untrue to the girl to whom he was plighted, who, he believed, relied on him for her ultimate happiness. And so, silent and depressed, he sat and stared in front of him, while she leaned her head dejectedly on her hand, resting her elbow on the marble rail of the pergola bench. A per-

vading stillness was everywhere, yet earth and air were alive and stirring with the myriad world of the night, in which the soft serenades of the birds, the whirl of tiny winged things, the gentle rustling of the living leaves



and the slow leaping of the waters blended into a monotone of sound. Above all this came the voice of the others advancing in their direction. As if suddenly conscious that their hour was at an end, the American arose to his feet, and paused before her. Quite wearily, the girl accepted his hand, and stood looking up into

his eyes with a gravely troubled expression. If his fingers unconsciously gave any pressure of warmth, she neither noticed it, nor made return. Yet, she did not attempt to withdraw her hand from his clasp. The voices were closer now, and the footsteps audible.

"You may do something for me," she said softly. "Guard my brother as you would if he were yours, for in action he is impetuous."

"I shall," he said, simply.

"And you may give me one other promise: that you will not foolishly rush into peril, yourself."

His hand tightened, and he leaned forward, his face twisting a little with his suppression.

"I should sorrow if anything happened to you — should grieve afterward to think — to know — that the world no longer held the most loyal gentleman I have ever known."

Margaret pulled her hand from his so abruptly that it was like a repulse, and turned away. But, as she did so, he saw that her lips were compressed, that her throat was fluttering. As she walked ahead of him to meet the others, he followed with a strange sense of humbleness and reverence, as of one who has seen a triumph over a temptation and ordeal, the magnitude of which he alone can comprehend.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

IT was many hours before sunrise, and the southern stars still glittered, cold and white in the dawn, when hoofs clattered up the narrow street outside the consulate. The porter, grumbling, crawled sleepily from his cot at the gate, opened the door wide enough to stick his nose through the crack, and then, grown suddenly alert, hurried away to Dick's room to arouse him. The officer garbed himself in the new uniform, and hurried down to the coffee and rolls that were in waiting. He was glad to live in the saddle again, and in strenuous action to forget all that had troubled him since his arrival in Fez. He had bade the members of the house good-bye the night before, and had insisted that no one should arise for his departure. But, while he was gulping his hot coffee in mouthfuls, the Honorable Bob, drowsy and only half-awake, and clad in his pajamas, came pattering in.

"Couldn't see you go, boy," he said, "unless I got up, and it didn't seem quite right for you to pull out this way with nobody to say good-luck to you, old man."

He looked at the officer affectionately when the latter protested against his having arisen at such an early hour.

"Kaid's comin' here to get you, Dick," he said. "Told me so last night, so take your time." He gave a long sigh, and shifted his slippered feet to a tabouret.

"Wish I were goin' along," he said, plaintively. "Been a mighty long time since the sun-up saw me hittin' the trail. Makes me feel kind of old and useless. Besides, you're goin' with a mighty good man. Clarke ain't much on conversation, but he's there when it comes to doin' things. He's going out there to find out what the trouble is, and you bet your boots he'll come back bubblin' over with information that'd make Mr. Webster look uneducated. He ain't much to look at, and he don't size well; but it ain't size that counts — it's in bein' able to go right on through, and get what you start after. That's what makes heroes and mosquitos alike."

Dick smiled, and went on with his breakfast. A man entered from outside, to say that the kaid was coming, and a minute later that officer appeared, clad in a worn garment that betokened other arduous campaigns, nodded to the Americans, and poured himself a cup of coffee.

"Ah, haven't repented of your rashness, and are bound to go, captain?" he questioned.

Whitney looked annoyed.

"No," he said. "I've nothing to repent, and, indeed, if it weren't for being half-asleep, and having to get up so early, I would say I felt like a boy again going on a picnic."

The kaid's face darkened.

"You know," he said, "I'm not sure this is to be a picnic. I've more news."

They waited for him to continue, while he emptied his cup, and poured another.

"Got word last night that there might be trouble. Made arrangements so we are to be followed at intervals by small forces of cavalry. They're to be within reach in case —"

The general stopped abruptly, and looked from one to the other of his companions. He glanced behind, to see that no one was within hearing, and then leaned across the table, and spoke in a lower tone of voice.

"— in case war breaks out within ten days," he concluded. "It can't last; but, while it does, we may have more excitement than we care for."

The consul would have said something, but the officer held up his hand, and went on:

"There is no reason why you should have any alarm here in Fez," he said, "and it isn't worth while to say anything to Miss Charlotte, or my sister. They might worry about it. Only, don't be surprised if you hear news of an uprising."

He looked sharply round, as if with a sense that some one had been eavesdropping, and frowned. Behind them stood the porter from the outer gate, the man who had held the jewels of Buhammei, until compelled by accidental discovery to disgorge. He had come in so silently that his entrance had not been observed. But, if he had heard anything of interest, or if he even could understand anything of English, his face gave no betrayal. He stood quietly enough, yet for some reason none of the men at the table felt like discussing anything more of the projected trip.

The younger men arose from the table together, and bade the consul good-bye, and he, half-shivering in the

coldness of the hour, turned back across the *patio*, his slippered feet slapping the tile and his pajamas flapping about him. They passed out into the courtyard and up to the outer door, the Arab following them noiselessly, and still giving no sign that he had understood any scrap of conversation. Once, the *kaid* stopped and glared at the fellow, as if about to speak, then, thinking better of it, trudged ahead to the unbarred door. Dick looked back at the walls of the house, which were relieved here and there by curving iron gratings before high, narrow windows with curved and pointed tops, the blue tiles of the borders dimly visible in the early morning light. He could not be sure, but thought, as his eyes traveled instinctively to one in particular (like those of a man who has been watched intently, and instinctively is drawn toward the point of observance) that he caught sight of a white face watching him, and, too, he believed that it was framed with dark hair, which had become unbound by a night's restlessness. His heart beat a little more quickly, and he stared at the opening, but could see nothing more. The face, if there had been one, had disappeared, and he was to leave with no further good-bye. Made aware that the *kaid* was waiting for him, he turned again toward the gate, and passed through. The Englishman halted in the midst of a group of men and horses, where torches were held. The gate clanged slowly shut behind them, and they heard the fall of the heavy bars.

A dark face, scarred and twisted, turned to Dick from the circle of light, its lips opened, exposing strong, small teeth, and he recognized Suleyman, who had saved

his life on the top of Mount Zalag. The man was evidently as quick as he to recognize, and gave a friendly salute, throwing his hand up with such a quick gesture that the American was surprised by its alertness.

Dick walked over and extended his hand.

"I thank you," he said, understandingly.

"Ah," said the kaid, "I see you recognize each other. You can trust him in all things, captain. He's ugly but true."

The kaid spoke as impersonally as if the Arab were a block of stone. The Arab smiled and bowed.

Dick examined the animal he was to ride, and found that he had been apportioned a delicate-limbed, clean-cut Arabian horse, such as is occasionally seen round the tents of the richer Bedouin sheik, and he was thankful that a better mount fell to his share than those he had seen when traversing the city at different times. He swung himself into the saddle, and fell in behind the kaid, who, as if anxious to be far away from the city before the dawn broke, spurred his horse to a canter. They did not turn back from the old city to the new, but, instead, switched out through one of the "thready" streets into a broader thoroughfare, and from that to the city wall.

A sentry recognized the general, and saluted by striking the front of his red fez, and then called to the guard, which came tumbling out of a narrow doorway. The soldiers lined up, and stood at attention, while other soldiers swung back the creaking, ponderous doors. The party spurred through the gate, and found themselves passing the tents of the cobblers, the nomads, and

the sleeping market men, who were resting beside their packs, and awaiting the hour of the city's unlocking. A pack of mongrel dogs gave tongue; their owners swore at them in soft gutturals. The cavalcade wound its way slowly along the encumbered road, reached the outskirts of the gathering, and started off at a gallop. Dick pulled his horse up beside the kaid, and saw that the latter's face was grim and set, and, even in the quickness of this inspection, formed the idea that the officer of the Sultan was disturbed over something, which he had not chosen to give in confidence to his friends of the consulate. He wondered if the kaid's taciturnity would ever drop away, now that they were to become tent companions, and vaguely wished the man were more free-spoken. But he was too occupied with his own thoughts to force conversation, so the two men rode side by side for several miles without saying anything, while overhead the stars began to die out, and the stillness that presages the day increased, until they alone of all the silent world seemed alert and alive.

They came to a wayside *cuba*, where everything was still and ghostly, and the road wound through dense masses of acacias, and, almost as the echoes thrown from the front of the square building died away, they heard a low order from the roadside, saw shadowy forms spring into action and come running toward them.

Dick felt for his pistol, not knowing what to expect in this strange, somnolent land. But the kaid, catching the movement, smiled and spoke.

"Not an attack, captain," he said. "Just some of my men, who will accompany us, and have been waiting

for us to arrive. They compose my body-guard. I sent them on here last night, because I didn't care to have the news that we were going out of the city too widely scattered. In Morocco, one never can tell how news is disseminated."

The two-score horsemen fell in behind. The scar-faced Sidi-Suleyman spurred his horse forward, and in Arabic reported, "All here, sir."

The kaid with a nod dismissed the man, who at once dropped into the rear-guard. The American began to admire the excellent discipline displayed, and at the same time pondered over the character of the silent man by his side, who rode so unfalteringly, had so little to say, and yet carried with him a sense of absolute self-confidence and command. He experienced an instant's home-longing, as he thought of the time when he led his troopers out across the far Western deserts, before the sun came up to light the way; he wearily regretted that his lines had ever brought him away into this foreign country, where everything seemed unreal and unreliable, and where the even trend of his life and affections had been upset by a chance meeting, which had robbed him of contentment and rest. He looked back at the men behind. They appeared tall and robust. They wore red fox, and their caics wrapped loosely around them and their red silken transparencies barely concealed the gorgeousness of their embroidered collars as they fluttered, twisted and writhed in the air. They looked half-visionary, but the soft thunder of their horses' hoofs pounding over the road dispelled the illusion that they were other than substantial. The short stirrups, the heavy capari-

sons, the long, loosely held reins, the peaked saddles, from which a rider could scarcely be thrown, were all unlike those of the Western cavalymen he had been accustomed to lead, and yet there was about them something of fierce, sleeping vigor that made him question whether they would not prove formidable in a fight. He half-wished that he might see them tested; he half-wished that he might see them draw the heavy sabers by their sides, or pull from their girdles the curved daggers, of which the bare hilts protruded.

The kaid turned and looked at his friend, and, as if divining his thought, remarked:

"They're good soldiers, in their way. Fight to the end. Bad for discipline, however."

"But you are making them come to the drill after all," observed the officer, hoping to lead the kaid on to speak.

"Yes, and no," was the reply. "Sometimes, I think there are but few of them who don't hate me. Other times, I think they do try to please. But I trust none save Sidi-Suleyman, who has been tested."

The kaid dropped his head forward, and rode on, giving such plain evidence that he did not care to talk further that Whitney again left him to himself. The sky in the east had become filled with a sudden light, which brought out the long patches of red, white and yellow flowers covering the immense plain over which they rode, where nothing seemed to break the monotony beyond the rolling of the hills and the distant outlines of mountains. At the roadside beside the flowering shrubs, the ground stretched away with a coating

of grass, aloes and prickly pear, which, in the dawn, seemed inhospitable and repellent. Motionless palm trees watched them from the distance, and everything seemed waiting and sinister. Nowhere could Dick see a curl of smoke, a peeping roof-top, or a living thing. It was like a dreary, untenanted world. A commotion and muttering behind recalled him. Again the scar-faced Sidi-Suleyman rode forward beside the kaid, and waved his hand toward the east.

"Yes, we'll stop now," the American heard the kaid say, and the cavalcade came to a halt, the men dismounting swiftly, and unsaddling their sweating horses. In a moment, a camp-fire was blazing, and from panniers of led horses supplies were being taken by trained hands. Dick watched the man who unsaddled his own mount, and then looked at the cook who was preparing a breakfast for the squad. Suddenly, a wailing, vibrant cry came from a man far out on the outskirts. It was the Mussulman sentry, warning his fellows that the first hour of prayer was at hand. The sun peeped above the horizon. Every soldier of the party stopped his task, threw his mantle out wide spread upon the ground, faced the east, and knelt down. As if by common impulse, they rubbed head, face, hand and arms with sand clutched from beside their mantles, and then began their prayers, as the sun, with the abruptness of the latitude, came slipping up. Now, they arose to their feet, still mumbling prayers, again to throw themselves face downward in prostration, or again to rise upon their knees with uplifted hands and closed eyes. Dick saw that the kaid had removed his helmet, and now stood quietly and re-

spectfully watching his followers, as if making all possible deference to a religious belief that was other than his own.

The men arose at last from their postures with no sign of religious fervor, and resumed their duties, the cook picking up the knife that he had carefully laid down on the edge of his mantle, the soldier, who had had a curry-comb in his hand when the call for prayer was given, resuming it; in a minute, the temporary camp was acting as if it had never known a religious emotion.

"There!" the kaid said. "You can see from that how deep this religion is. It's full of observance, and that's about all. Isn't very inspiring, is it? There are five seasons of prayer in each day, and you'll see this performance repeated by men who immediately after would cut a throat without any compunctions whatever."

The general turned away with a disgusted air, walked out to the extreme edge of the plateau on which they had halted, and appeared to be looking far out over the plains. His stocky figure was outlined grimly resolute in the morning sunlight as he stood squarely on his heels and shaded his eyes with his hands.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE forenoon wore away rapidly for Dick, who discovered that the tribesmen were far different from any he had encountered on his journey from Tangier. He observed something else, also: that they encountered one caravan with a full score of camels. He was riding abreast the kaid at the time, and saw that the Englishman was frowning intently at the camel drivers, his eyes glittering hard from beneath his white helmet. They passed the cavalcade, and went on through the village before he called a halt. As the men dismounted, the kaid called Sidi-Suleyman to him.

"Sidi," he said, "we shall stop here for the noon rest. You noticed those chaps back there?"

The scar-faced man, looking grave, answered:

"Yes, sir, Berbers those. May I speak?" He looked significantly at Dick.

"Yes, Sidi. We have no secrets from Captain Whitney."

The scar-faced man grinned in a friendly way at Dick, and then, turning to the kaid, said:

"Did His Excellency see camel packs? Did see kind of camels? Did notice one have harness like same belong sheik?"

The kaid nodded his head in assent, and the Arab broke into his native tongue suddenly, as if wishing to

express himself with more facility. But the American caught his meaning.

"Those Berbers," said Sidi-Suleyman, "have traveled very hard. Their camels and horses show it. It has been many months since they left Taflet. They travel for no good purpose. They sow rebellion. If his excellency will permit, I shall investigate."

"Good!" was the kaid's laconic response.

The scar-faced man, with a salute, turned away in the direction of the village. Dick, tired by the early hour of rising, and long unaccustomed to such exercise, went to sleep in the shade of a stunted orange tree, and was surprised, when awakened, to discover that he had slept nearly all the afternoon. The kaid and Sidi-Suleyman were standing alone by him, talking in a low tone. He joined them.

"Well, captain," the kaid said, "we didn't start on this expedition a minute too soon. There's a new shereef in the field, and, unless I'm badly mistaken, there will be a *Jehad* declared within a fortnight."

Dick gave a low whistle of surprise.

"I understand," he said, "that the usual preliminaries consisted of a lot of declarations as to what the ambitious one would do if made Sultan."

"That is the custom, but this new pretender is making his plans far more adroitly than has ever been the case in a prior rebellion."

"But you expect a declaration?"

"Yes," answered the kaid, thoughtfully. "The declaration will come before this fellow takes to arms; but, if one can judge from the adroit way in which this whole

stew has been quietly worked up, that declaration will be followed by war with no delay whatever. This fellow is a bad man."

"Who is he?"

"That is the mysterious part of it. All that Sidi has been able to learn indicates that he is a Berber, but, as a rule, fierce and intractable as they are, they do not begin rebellions. There is a good moon tonight, and I shall change our plans, and head over toward Telaya, where they say that another caravan has been resting for several days, and that some agitator has been meeting a good many of the tribal chiefs."

The kaid marched over to the little tent that had been thrown up for his accommodation, and Whitney, strolling after him, saw that he was writing dispatches. Dick did not interrupt, but strolled on through the camp, watching the gamblers and others who were polishing their arms or accoutrements. The kaid had summoned Sidi-Suleyman, and was giving the man instructions, as the American returned.

When the moon came up, the party mounted, and swung away over the desert, as if taking the road to Mequinez. They rode for a half-hour, until the village had been lost from sight, before they again halted. The kaid nodded to Sidi, who had been riding beside him, and the Moor passed back through the ranks on some mysterious errand. Six horsemen detached themselves, rode out past the kaid, saluted, and, two by two, galloped away in different directions. Another man, evidently familiar with the trails leading away from the main road, spurred forward in obedience to a command

by Sidi, and the entire cavalcade then swung abruptly off toward the south. The kaid took his own time to enlighten the American as to what action had been taken. They had ridden for a couple of hours before he turned in his saddle, and faced his companion.

"I sent dispatches to Fez, Mequinez and Rabat," he said, "and am going to have troops drawn into Mequinez."

He spurred his horse forward again, and then, as if by an afterthought, again turned back to the American.

"By the way, captain, the return couriers from Fez will probably overtake us within two or three days, and will bring our first letters from home."

At that, Dick felt a sudden return of his perturbation. For a full hour more, he could not get his mind from the thought of the English girl and her speech of the night before, and, in recurring to their parting scene, there was a strange insistency, a something suggested by her attitude, a sense of intimacy or tenderness far beyond anything conveyed by her words. His mental review was interrupted by the dropping back of the guide, who had been riding some distance in front.

"Telaya lies yonder, behind those hills," the man said to the kaid, lifting his hands with dramatic gesture.

The kaid turned to Sidi, who had ridden forward.

"We will camp out of sight of the village," he said. "You ride with him, Sidi, and select the place."

Again, the party rode forward, but now at a more rapid pace. At times, where the ground permitted, they broke into a free gallop, their caftans streaming back in the wind, and Dick, looking back, came to the con-

clusion that these men were, at least, good troopers. Once, when they slowed down, he looked at his watch, and was surprised to see that it was ten o'clock. In spite of the distance they had come, the horses exhibited no great distress. They halted, at last, beside a little stream, which in the moonlight appeared white and muddy, but into which their horses stretched eager muzzles. With incredible quickness, the camp was established, but Dick noted that, unlike the halt at noon, there was no noise of conversation, and silence seemed to have been ordered. The fires that were lighted were small and shaded, so that they would attract no attention. Dick wondered what the cause for such caution could be, thinking that in this uninhabited section of the country, off the main trail, it was most unlikely that anyone could pass, particularly at the late hour of the night. He observed that the kaid and Sidi-Suleyman had disappeared into their tents the moment these were pitched, and he was astonished to see, but a short time after, both emerge, completely clad in the flowing costume of tribesmen. Moreover, as the kaid approached him, he discovered that the general's face had been smudged over, until he could not be recognized as other than a Moor. His *jelaba* had been drawn up about the lower part of his face, effectually concealing his smooth-shaven contour.

"I'm going over there to the village," the kaid said. "It is not likely that I will find anybody except the dogs awake, but, on the other hand, who knows?" He concluded with a suggestive shrug of the shoulders.

Dick did not voice his regret that he could not accom-

pany them, but felt somewhat as Achilles must have felt when he sulked in his tent. After eating a very hasty meal, the kaid and his captain rode rapidly away in the moonlight. They swung round a hill, and discovered that Telaya, almost at their feet in the valley below, was aglow with light. Once or twice, as they approached, they heard shouts and looked at each other, suspecting their significance.

The village was not a large one, but was of sufficient size to have a mosque, the minarets of which shone white and high in the moonlight. As they made their way through the streets, they met no one, and at last debouched into a little open square, in the midst of which was a bonfire, round which white-clad figures were moving restlessly under the spell of some desert orator, who, with head thrown back, was delivering an impassioned speech.

It was quite evident, from the appearance of the crowd, that many of them were strangers to one another, and of different tribes. Indeed, one of the first features that the kaid observed was the large number of Berbers who mingled with the other tribesmen. Swarthy and wild, erect and high-headed, they moved here and there with the grace of lithe animals of that desert on the borders of which they held their dwelling place. Their very presence suggested the wildness of that Amalat Sahara which no white man has ever invaded, where the customs antedating Christ still run. From the whiteness of their hoods, their eyes gleamed sharp and bright when turned with direct fearlessness upon anyone approaching them. Now and then, as the kaid and his

companion passed, they were stared at with a fiercely questioning inspection. But, in appearance, the general and his companion were so much a part of the barbaric gathering that they were soon forgotten in the turmoil.

At the far side of the bonfire, a sheik, with *jelaba* thrown back from his bronze neck and eyes that reflected the light, was delivering an impassioned speech, made eloquent through savage, untrammelled oratory. He was making the old appeal of the Moslem faith, and recounting the glories of that Prophet who had taught his followers that he was a divine master of the world. He took his hearers through epochs in which unbelievers had been brought to slavery under the domination of Islam. At intervals, he gesticulated with fervent gestures, and once, when exhorting his hearers to strangle the Nazarenes as they would mad dogs, held long, grasping fingers out before him, and spoke his words high-pitched through snarling lips. From those around the kaid and his companion came a long drawn, "Ah!" and muttered exclamations of approval.

The whole square reeked with excitement and religious frenzy. Kaid Clarke, with arms folded, stood quiet and composed in the midst of this clamor; Sidi-Suleyman, carrying out his part of a fanatical tribesman, joined in the shouts of acclamation, or muttered prayers. A madman, wrought to an extravagance of insanity in the atmosphere of excitement, created a diversion by forcing his way through the crowd, and jumping into the flames. The sheik leaped forward, and dragged the crazed man out, and rolled the scorched and writhing mass in the sand. Others led the victim away, babbling

and moaning, the crowd parting swiftly before them. The white- or gray-clad figures whispered pityingly of the holy man stricken by Allah, and began muttered conversations with those near at hand.

"He speaks with the tongue of the Prophet. Does he not, brother?" asked a fierce-looking old man, who leaned forward and stared into the kaid's face.

Before the questioner's suspicions could be aroused, Sidi-Suleyman pushed his way between them, and thrust his face forward.

"The sheik speaks the truth," he said. "Allah is great, and must prevail." And, to strengthen his part, he broke into objurgations scarcely less vehement than those of the orator, who, for the moment, was standing quietly and glaring with his bright eyes at those around. Suddenly, the sheik again stepped closer to the fire, and held an open hand high with a commanding gesture. A pock-marked Berber, whose wrinkled face told of many years, clapped his hands smartly for silence. Little by little, the crowd became quiet, and again the sheik resumed his appeal.

"A Prophet has come to the land of the mighty," he declared, "who will cast from it the unbelieving dogs, who have profaned its cemeteries, desecrated its houses of worship, and invaded the homes of the faithful. The false one, who sits upon the throne as the Sword of Allah, has come to the end of his reign. The one who comes will give you back all that you have lost. Even now, he consults with the Prophet in the mosques. Before the moon wanes, he will have declared a *Jehad*, the holiest of wars, which will end in his mastery of the

world. To him alone will the Berber bow his head. I have spoken."

He stopped and looked about, as if his speech were ended. Towering as he did above his fellows, and looking down from the highest point in the square, some outer movement in front of the mosque attracted his attention, and he again demanded silence.

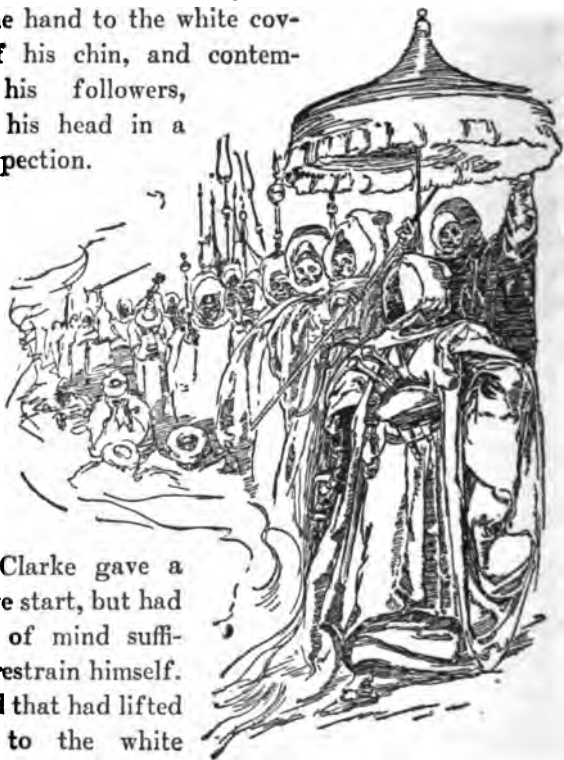
"Stand you still!" he shouted, throwing both hands aloft. "Stand you still! The son of the Prophet comes!"

The murmurings of conversation died away, and an almost breathless silence invaded and subjugated them all. Kaid Clarke, frowning toward the mosque, saw the crowd before it break into a swirling motion. As if by magic, a wide path was opened, at the extreme end of which he saw a solitary white-clad figure, moving slowly forward toward them. Its arms were folded across the breast, its face swathed in the *jelaba*, and its progress was majestic. Along the line of march, the spectators began to drop forward with heads bowed to the ground, as if in the presence of the commander of the faithful himself. The approaching man looked neither to right nor to left, but advanced straight toward the fire on the low crest of the hill, with slow, stately step. At last, he stood in the central circle. All round, men had prostrated themselves, until he alone stood erect.

Sidi-Suleyman, intensely alive to their dangerous position, dropped to his knees, and fairly dragged Kaid Clarke down with him. He put a warning hand out, and squeezed the Englishman's wrist so savagely that the latter was, for the first time, aroused to his peril.

Fortunately, the intruders were not in the foremost row, and were surrounded by men so wrapt in emotion that their actions were not observed. There was none more reverent in attitude than Sidi-Suleyman, who bowed his head to the ground.

The kaid, noting that those round him were unobserving, lifted his head and watched the new leader of the faithful. For what seemed a long time, the man stood motionless, and then slowly unfolded his arms. He lifted one hand to the white covering of his chin, and contemplated his followers, turning his head in a quiet inspection.



Kaid Clarke gave a convulsive start, but had presence of mind sufficient to restrain himself. The hand that had lifted upward to the white

covering of the Prophet's face, had its two middle fingers twisted under to the palm. Slowly, the *jelaba* fell away, and there, clear and distinct, in the light of the fire, and the moon, with his face grim, determined and kingly, stood Buhammei.

All the veiled meaning of the fiery speech — its allusions to royal descent, its declaration that from the Berbers had come a high shereef miraculously returned to his own — was made plain. The mystery of that eloquence with which Buhammei had told his own life's tragedy in the Garden of Fate, was explained. He himself was the royal prince, carried high above the wall in the arms of the Berber crone.

The kaid's hands clenched themselves tightly together, and a chill of apprehension, cold as a blast from icy peaks, swept over him. In one swift glance of prescience, he saw that red future, in which Morocco was to be bathed in blood.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

FOR a full minute, Buhammei stood like a statue looking over the bent backs of his followers, and then, stretching forth his hands, called into the hushed and waiting silence, in his clear, high voice:

"Allah Wahid!" — "There is but one God!"

"Wa la ushareka bihi aheda!" — "And no other one linked with that!" Dutifully and reverentially, the bent ones finished the phrase from the Koran.

The kaid, with those round him, waited for Buhammei to speak, and the throng maintained an awed stillness. The wait extended over several minutes, in which Buhammei, dignified and kingly, stood alone, and stared into the depths of the fire before him. Accustomed as he was to the sight of princely Moors, the kaid was compelled to admit that he had seen no more majestic figure than that which stood on the eminence before him.

At last, Buhammei, without deigning further recognition of those round, stalked slowly back toward the mosque, and, in the light of the moon, he appeared a Prophet in truth as sight of him was swallowed up by the white-clad figures that arose to their feet as soon as his back was turned upon them. The kaid, in his excitement, had crowded higher, up to the very edge of the fire, and, standing on tiptoe, was trying to estimate the strength of this gathering.

"We must go now, quick, your excellency!" Sidi-

Suleyman whispered earnestly in his ear. "In five minutes, when the excitement dies, it will be difficult."

As quickly as possible, they threaded their way out of the writhing and twisting crowd, and away from the square, which, so silent but a minute before, was now clamorous with the shouts of fanatics, with excited conversation, and with occasional disputes. So, they passed out of the city, and on to a cluster of sacred olive trees, where their horses were tied, mounted, and at a rapid gallop started toward the camp, before either said a word.

"How many does his excellency think were there?" questioned Sidi, as though voicing the kaid's own thought.

"At least five hundred, I should say. What think you?"

The Moor threw up his hand with a gesture, and turned his grinning, mutilated face toward his superior.

"Too many, I should say, for forty men to conquer."

Again, he had voiced the thought of the kaid, who was reluctantly weighing the chances, and wondering whether he dared with his small detachment attempt the arrest of Buhammei, before the leader could carry his propaganda to a point where he would be justified in openly declaring a holy war. They climbed up on the shoulder of the hill, and followed the white trail round its generously curved flank to their encampment, where they passed an alert sentry, and reached the solitary large tent in which the American captain was awaiting them. Stretched in a circle round it were the little "dog-tents," in each of which two tired troopers slept.

Sidi-Suleyman, with a soft good-night, turned aside to his own sleeping quarters, and the kaid lifted the opening of his own tent, and entered.

"Well," Dick said, "I trust you have good news."

"On the contrary," the kaid answered, as he threw off his burnous, stripped down to his undershirt and baggy drawers, and poured water from a carafe into a camp-basin. Dick divined from the general's very attitude that he was worried. He deluged his face with the soapy water, to remove the disfiguring stain of his disguise, deliberately dried his face and hands, donned a camp-jacket, and lighted his pipe, before he gave the American any information.

"Bad!" he said; "distinctly bad! That is the curse of soldiering in this country. One never gets information until the whole mountain district is in an uproar. This uprising has gone much farther than any of us dreamed. It must have been preparing for months."

He smoked meditatively for a full minute, while Dick waited for him to impart further news of his trip.

"By the way," he said, looking at his companion, "you can't imagine who the latest Prophet is. It's our friend, Mr. Buhammei."

Dick jumped to his feet, kicking back the camp-stool on which he had been sitting.

"Buhammei! Buhammei! The devil!"

"Ah! That's what he seemed to be."

"But how does he happen — ?"

"He happens to be, as a matter of fact, as much the rightful heir to the Moroccan throne as the gentleman who now graces it. He is the boy whose mother was

murdered in our friend's newly discovered garden, who was carried away by his nurse, survived all vicissitudes, and now comes back to claim what he doubtless believes he is fully entitled to."

Dick dropped back into his seat, and frowned into space.

"You are quite right," the kaid said, after an interval of silence. "I know what you are thinking of. In all Morocco, there is none more menaced tonight than the Honorable Robert Marshall, his daughter, my sister, you and I. Listen!" he said suddenly, leaning forward. "A very grave responsibility devolves upon us. There is yet time for you to hurry back to Fez, and escape with Miss Marshall, Margaret and the consul, to the coast."

The American looked at the speaker with an inquiring frown.

"You admit defeat, then?"

"No — absolutely, no! They can't beat me! They shall not!" was the kaid's emphatic reply.

"Then, why endeavor to escape to the coast? Would not that undertaking be far more dangerous than remaining in Fez? Do you think for an instant that your sister, Miss Margaret, is of the kind that would consent to go, when her brother was left in jeopardy? Do you suppose old Bob Marshall would tamely trust to a coward's luck in his own behalf?"

It was the Englishman's turn to consider the relative chances.

"No," he admitted, slowly. "I'm afraid you would have as great a task, first to induce them to go, and second to conduct them safely to Tangiers, as I shall

have in laying our Mr. Buhammei by the heels. To tell the truth," he added wearily, "I am a trifle unnerved by what I have seen tonight. I do not know how far this rebellion has spread. I don't know what dangers lie in wait between Fez and the sea."

He threw himself on his camp-cot, still smoking, and in terse sentences told the American what he had that night seen in the square before the mosque.

"Five hundred of them," he concluded; "five hundred mad, rebellious savages, waiting for this man, who is our enemy, to declare a *Jehad* — a holy war!"

"But do you think our position here is safe?"

"Yes; temporarily, at least. It cannot be possible that Buhammei is yet strong enough to strike. All I can do is to rush additional warning to the Sultan, the grand vizier and the minister of war, and then try, if circumstances warrant, to capture Mr. Buhammei, before he can do further mischief, or concentrate his forces. He must inevitably attack Fez. This will be no barbarian's war, for, unless I am mistaken in the man, he has profited by his European education, and, besides, there may be something else behind all this."

He sat up on the edge of the cot, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and with frank, unwavering eyes questioned the American:

"You are not over here on a diplomatic mission?"

"No," answered Dick, in surprise.

"And you are not interested in the political side of this?"

"Not in the least, believe me, general. The only interest I have is a mutual one."

The kaid, as if satisfied with this answer, carefully re-filled his pipe, and lighted it.

“For a long time, captain, France has wanted Morocco. For a long time, the humble Mr. Buhammei, a quiet gentleman, obscure and unknown, resided in Paris, with ample means at his command. France was waiting, waiting for him to return and declare himself the true Sultan of Morocco. For an equally long time, modern arms have been smuggled into this country. We confiscated them at Tangier, at Rabat; and only a short time ago, from Agadir, that port where the Atlas mountains touch the sea, we gathered in others, doubtless bound for Tafilet, where dwells the Berber. Is not the conclusion plain?”

The American burst into a crisp, “Certainly. Nothing could be plainer than that. But what is the disposition of your troops? How quickly can they be concentrated?”

The kaid got to his feet, and rummaged in a war-bag. From it, he pulled out a tin case, containing military maps, which he spread on the ground between them.

“Here,” he said, with an indicative finger, “is Rabat. In it are a thousand well-trained men. Here lies Mequinez, where, fortunately, are assembled a thousand others—not so good, but as good as I could make. For ten days, fifteen hundred more fairly good soldiers have been traveling from Marakesh to Fez; hence, though traveling leisurely, they are now due at Mequinez. Fez can spare a thousand without endangering herself, and, in emergency, could send five thousand more.”

Still resting on his knees, he straightened up, and met the captain's eyes.

"Give me but four days," he said, "and I will have nearly five thousand well-armed men, to meet whatever Mr. Buhammei can offer. But that isn't all."

He stood upon his feet, and, while rolling his maps in his hands, continued:

"Not even Buhammei knows that I have in Fez, for just such an emergency, a battery of the best machine-guns that money can buy. The Berber has hitherto met nothing but the plainest of old-time artillery, and," he added with grim emphasis, in a lower tone of voice, "he never heard of Omdurman, where thousands dearly paid for Gordon's death!"

As if he had no desire for further conversation, the kaid pulled a dispatch-book from his pocket, and with a remarkable facility began writing in Arabic characters, while the American, marveling at this accomplishment, curiously watched. Sheet after sheet was pulled off in manifold; then, the general stepped to the door of his tent. The American heard him giving instructions to his orderly, and, almost instantly, as if he had been anticipating some instruction, Sidi Suleyman appeared. The Kaid handed the man the sealed dispatches.

"These must be sent at once," he said. "Neither horses nor men are to be spared. Pick the best you have, and try to make them believe, if such a thing is possible, that the fate of Morocco and their lives depend on haste. Hurry up now! Go!"

As calmly as though nothing further were worrying

him, he turned back into the tent, and began removing his boots, preparatory to going to bed.

"Before our would-be Sultan realizes it," he said, "I'll have an army here that will tear him, his followers and his ambitions into such shreds that this uprising business will be a little less popular than forming a suicide party."

Dick, composing himself for sleep and watching, saw that the Moslem custom was so firmly fixed that, instead of blowing out his candle, the kaid reached over a pair of sunburned fingers, and snuffed it to extinguishment.

The American was enough of a campaigner to trust to the guard of the sentries, and dropped into such a profound sleep that he did not move until the cry for morning prayer awakened him. He lifted himself to his elbow, and looked across at Clarke's cot. It was empty. The sturdy little adventurer had already aroused himself, and had slipped noiselessly out.

Dick stepped to the entrance of his tent, and peeped through the aperture. The Mussulmans, with faces to the east, were making their morning prayers. The murmur of sound came to him in a persistent drone. The kaid, looking rested and determined, was standing near a camp-fire, absorbed in watching the worshippers. Dick stepped back into the tent, washed his face, donned his clothing, and then, hearing sounds of activity outside indicative that prayer-time was over, joined the Englishman.

"Hello," said the latter. "Nice morning, eh?"

Dick wondered whether or not, beneath this unemo-

tional exterior, dwelt apprehension. He took some pride in accepting the situation as calmly as did the kaid himself.

"The morning suits me," he said. "I only hope that you rested as well as did I. But you must have turned out rather early."

The kaid grinned responsively.

"Yes," he said. "I got up to send poor old Sidi back into that dirty nest of rebels, to learn all he can about their plans, and whether the gentle cut-throat, Buhammei, intends to stay there for any length of time. Hello! Who's this?"

A travel-stained man, dressed as a tribesman and watched by a sentry, approached, and saluted the kaid with the utmost deference.

"Ah," the kaid said in Arabic, "you are Gelalli, and you come from — ?"

"Jeb Magran."

"Well?"

"To tell His Excellency that one Bou Hammei, of the tribe of Berber, lays claim to the throne, and prepares a holy war. The sheiks are with him. Not a village in Tafilet but awaits his call. From Abhari to Agadir, they will answer his summons. Ten thousand spears will fall on Fez."

The kaid studied the man's face with an impassive eye.

"How soon, think you?"

"How soon?" The man made an expressive gesture of ignorance. "Who can say? Before the moon wanes, I should think."

To the surprise of the American, the kaid gave the man unstinted praise for expediency in reporting, and then, calling to his orderly, issued instructions that the man, evidently one of his secret agents, should be provided for.

"Did you understand that?" he asked, turning toward Dick.

"Yes; I think so."

"Sounds promising, doesn't it? This trip was made none too soon. Buhammei has been clever, very clever, indeed! He is the first man since I have been here who has ever stirred up a revolt with such quietude that no one learned of it until it was ripe. Do you know? — personal reasons aside, I rather like that fellow. We must credit him with brains."

He turned abruptly on his heel, and walked back into his tent, leaving the American to wander through the camp, where faces that were not unfriendly smiled at him in acceptance of the fact that he was on their side. Presently, the kaid's orderly summoned him, and he entered, and seated himself at a little camp-table opposite his friend. They were sitting in silence, each thinking of the danger of their situation, when they were disturbed by the entrance of Sidi-Suleyman, who stood, fez in hand, at the doorway, awaiting permission to speak. Clarke turned toward the man with an eager nod.

"Gone," the captain said; "all gone!"

For the first time, the American saw the adventurer give a start of surprise.

"Gone! Impossible! Where?"

Reverting to his native tongue, the Arab, speaking and gesticulating rapidly, told what he had learned.

At some early hour of the morning, the sheiks and tribesmen, whom the kaid had seen the night before, had hurried away toward that mysterious south, where the Atlas mountains, high and cold, sheltered men of the Berber tribes. Some alarm of the night, some message carried, perhaps by a belated traveler, had given them warning that round the bend of the hill rested the terrible Kaid Clarke, the most feared and respected general of the Sultan's army, ready, when need arose, to take vengeance upon them. The revolt was not ripe. They must gather their clans. And so, while the kaid and his troop slept, the sheiks had ridden, each in his own direction, and now it was certain that before forty-eight hours had elapsed the cries of the *Jehad* would ring throughout that turbulent land.

But, try as he might, whenever he came, Buhammei would be met by the cohorts of that calm little man, who, after hearing Sidi's report, smiled quietly to himself, tendered his companion a cigarette, and said:

"Going to be a nice, cool day for traveling, eh? Don't you think so?"

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

DICK, lounging over the hollow of his big Turkish saddle, admitted approvingly that his own men of Company M, could have broken camp with no more celerity. The echoes of the "mount" had not died away before the squadron was ready to move. They trotted out into the trail, Dick speculating as to which direction they would take, and then, somewhat to his surprise, turned northward toward Mequinez, following the banks of the stream.

The kaid seemed disinclined to conversation, and Dick, glancing at him now and then, decided that already his plans had been formed. Throughout the entire forenoon, scarcely a dozen sentences were interchanged between them. Once, the general called Sidi-Suleyman to his side, and the American, fearing that he might intrude, dropped back, and rode in the rear for a considerable distance. As he did so, he noticed a new and peculiar friendliness manifested by the bronzed riders who passed him. Moving slowly at the side of the road, he saw with some amazement that each trooper, in passing, gave him the salute, and he was at a loss to understand this change of attitude, until it was explained to him by Sidi's subaltern, who rode in the extreme rear.

"Does his excellency speak Arabic?" the officer questioned with a smile.

"Some of it — and understand more."

"His excellency is a kaid in his own country."

"Who told you that?"

"*El capitan*, Sidi-Suleyman, who says also his excellency is a very brave man, like Kaid Clarke."

Dick was endeavoring to formulate sentences of disavowal, when Sidi galloped back, beckoned another man from the detachment, apparently gave some instruction, and then fell into his own place in the troop. Evidently, one more courier had been dispatched, for the man rode rapidly ahead of the horsemen, and disappeared along the winding, hilly trail.

At noon, they made the customary halt, but this time there was no cooling shade to protect them from the sun. Dick was again surprised when he saw that they were pitching the tents on a lone hill by the bank of the stream, as if planning a somewhat extensive stay. Why they should decide to stop almost in the middle of a far-flung plain was beyond his imagination. Knowing the Englishman so well, however, he held his tongue, confident that sooner or later the kaid would explain. Clarke did so after they had concluded their luncheon.

"How does this strike you for a battlefield?" he asked.

Dick looked at him, inquiringly.

"Do you remember the maps of last night? Well, I have it reasoned out about this way: If Telaya was the most central meeting place for the sheiks, it is the natural heart of the rebellion. Buhammei's advance, as far as his plans can be made, will be on identically the same lines as those of civilized warfare. That being the case, his followers will concentrate on Telaya,

and then take this route toward Fez, or Mequinez, which from here are equally distant. As I explained to you last night, this is the most logical point of concentration for my men. By tomorrow night, I can have enough men here to meet any force which I believe it possible for Buhammei to bring against us. If he does not concentrate with a rapidity equal to mine, I have troops enough to advance on Telaya, and prevent any concentration on his part. Unless he is a more adroit leader than any they have ever had, so much so that his forces have been organized without our knowing it, I can put down this uprising in two weeks' hard work. If his men are assembling, this is the place we must whip them."

His followers were 'drowsing in the shade of their tents that afternoon, when another courier rode madly into the camp, on a horse that was ready to fall from exhaustion. He was brought into the tent, and Dick arose to excuse himself.

"Sit down," the kaid said. "It is better that you should know all my plans. One never can tell what will happen. You may be a kaid yourself before this little ruction is over. I can use a few men like you."

He turned to the courier, who began an excited report. As the fellow talked, Clarke's face darkened, and Dick, half-comprehending, recognized that the kaid had not underestimated the adroitness of the pretender. Considerable quantities of modern arms and ammunition had been landed at Agadir, some weeks previously. In the shadow of the Atlas Mountains, the Berbers were already armed. Across desert, plain and hill, singly

and in groups, the tribesmen and warriors had already heard the whispered call of the *Jehad*, and from all directions were riding on to Telaya. Less than fifty miles away, in that turbulent interior, the courier had passed an encampment of a thousand men, over whose central tent floated the banner of the new Prophet. Everywhere, the cry was the same, "On to Fez!" Buhammei would strike at the throne itself, without delay.

The excited voice of the Moor ended with the fervent call:

"The will of Allah be done!"

"That is all?" questioned the kaid.

"That is all!"

The kaid thanked his follower, and sent him out to join the troopers.

"Well," he said, turning to the American, "everything seems to be working all right. There is no fear of those fellows concentrating at Telaya before I have enough men to meet them."

"But how about that thousand?" questioned Dick.

"Humph! Those fellows always exaggerate. An actual count of that thousand would perhaps show five hundred, provided my Moorish courier's imagination was merely working at its accustomed pace."

"How many do you think he will be able to bring against you?"

"Somewhere between three and five thousand."

"But suppose he brings ten thousand?"

The kaid shook his head. "That would be serious," he said. "To meet such a force would seriously weaken the garrison at Fez. So far, I have done no

more than ask the minister of war to have a portion of those troops in readiness for quick marching — this only as an emergency measure. Furthermore, they would bring with them the machine-guns. We shall know more within the next twenty-four hours, and, in the meantime, are doing the best we can."

He kicked off his yellow boots, threw himself on his cot, and within five minutes was sleeping soundly. Dick went out and sought Sidi-Suleyman, with whom he passed a good portion of the afternoon. The more they talked together, the more convinced he was that Kaïd Clarke's foresight in mobilizing his troops would render Buhammei's career, however brilliant, a brief one.

Toward evening, Dick stood amazed at the change. When first the cavalcade rode into this country, the region had seemed lethargic and half-deserted. They found no riders or caravans that traveled with haste, no nomads who appeared other than lazy, and no signs of turbulence. Now, suddenly, as if by some sign in the heavens, groups of travelers could be seen skirting the plain, going to, and coming from, the Pass of Telaya. Within a single hour, twelve couriers, gray with dust, from as many different directions, had reported to the kaïd, and some of these, tired though they were, paused only for fresh mounts to continue their journey, carrying sealed orders from the little English officer, who, between dispatches, smoked and appeared calm and self-confident.

The first actual proof of the *Jehad* came at the hour of dusk, before the moon had arisen to paint sand and shrub a color of mysticism befitting a mystic country,

Dining leisurely, the two officers heard the sharp challenge of an outpost, and, a few minutes later, there were brought before them the first victims of the uprising. Four swarthy men stood with stolid fierceness in the entrance to the tent, whither they had been conducted by the guard. The light from the candle on the camp-table softened the stains of travel and distress, but Dick, leaning forward and staring at the man nearest to him, saw that his head-dress was discolored and stained.

"Tell his excellency," one of the visitors said harshly, "that a *Jehad* has been declared against the Sword of the Prophet by a dog of a pretender, the son of a barbarous mountain woman of the Berber tribe, and that we, true followers of the faith, have been fallen upon."

"I speak the tongue. Proceed direct," Clarke replied, and the four foreigners bowed deeply.

"We came," said their spokesman, "with eleven camels and our goods through the Valley of *El Darehn*. We heard this call to the *Jehad*, and scorned it. The followers of this dog, Bou Hammei, fell upon us because we would not join them, took from us all we had, and sent us to you after doing this."

The speaker reached up suddenly to his head-wrappings, and threw them back, as did his followers. Dick ground his teeth in sudden rage, but the kaïd sat cold and immovable, with no change of expression on his face. The stain of red was explained. Each man's ears had been neatly shorn away, and salt and ashes rubbed into his bleeding wounds.

"Take these men out," the kaïd commanded his or-

derly, "and see that they are given the best that is in the camp. And for you," he went on, addressing the victims of Buhammei's followers, "before the next *Ramadan*, a thousand ears of the unfaithful shall answer. I have spoken."

Dick, horrified, began to express his opinion of such barbarism, but the kaid only smiled.

"They got off lucky," he said. "It beats being buried in the sand up to your head, and left to the ants and vultures."

For a long time that evening, the kaid talked as he had never talked before, freely and without restraint, laughing now and then as he told of some of his experiences, and at times evidencing a humor with which the American had never accredited him. On the verge of the greatest trial he had ever met during long years of residence in this strange country, he seemed buoyed up by the elation of the coming conflicts. Dick was charmed with this good-fellowship, and, for a while after the kaid had retired, lay awake, staring up at the dim canvas above his head, and speculating regarding the curious career into the inner life of which he had been given a glance.

Dawn came to the little tent again, with its prayers and the peaceful round of camp activities. The purple haze, stretching far out across the yellow plain, paled and thinned, until each distant clump of bushes was outlined, and the sun leaped up for another day. It was hard to believe that war, dark and cruel with fanaticism, lurked anywhere in all this broad sweep of country. Nowhere, aside from their own encampment, was there

a sign of life. Gone were the white-clad men, who yesterday had passed feverishly along the road, or been silhouetted against the far horizon line; gone were the family parties, fleeing from, or seeking, the queen city of the Magreb, according to their belief as to which one should occupy the ancient throne. In the forenoon sun, the camp lay stagnant and still. On its outskirts, clusters of refugees or travel-worn couriers chatted with the troopers, or fiercely argued over the new uprising. Some of the soldiers, whose scars told of other wars, squatted in groups, and gambled, heedless of what the day or the days might bring. For these veterans of strife, Dick felt a warmth of friendship, which, whenever he passed, they appeared to return with interest.

It was well into the afternoon when an exclamation of a sentry brought everyone to his feet. The kaid emerged from his tent, where he had been pouring over maps, and, for several minutes, stared through a pair of binoculars, although Dick, straining his eyes, could find no cause for this new interest. Convinced that these men of the desert, accustomed to long reaches, could see further than could he, Dick was turning back, when the Englishman handed him the glasses.

"There they come," Clarke said, with some elation. "They're from Mequinez."

Dick adjusted the glasses, and saw in the distance a column of dust. He felt like shouting joyously. It was plain now that a considerable body of men was moving in their direction.

The kaid, as if dismissing the matter from his mind, returned to the seclusion of their tent, but Dick, with

all others of the camp, watched the growth of the oncoming column. The sun had dropped below the horizon, and the purple shadows were again deepening, before the advance guard approached to hailing distance. When some hundred yards away, a bugle called a high and unfamiliar greeting, and the vedette of the column halted, until it might be overtaken by those following. In the dull light, the American could still distinguish the colors of the guidons, where sixteen superbly mounted men sat abreast. Coming behind, file on file, and deploying out into mass formation behind them, came company after company of brilliantly garbed cavalymen of His Majesty, the Sultan, with spears at rest, until they formed a miniature motionless forest.

The kaid emerged from the tent in the full uniform of his rank, and stood stolidly awaiting the arriving officers. Back in the long distance behind, the waves of dust were still surging upward, their limits lost, and swallowed into the approaching darkness of the night. Dick, still clinging to the binoculars could distinguish the swaying heads of camels, hitched tandem and dragging pieces of artillery behind. Here and there, mules, more suggestive of the artillery trains of his own country, slogged forward in the midst of their drivers, bringing other cannon, of which the carriage-wheels clung to the sand of the road.

There was another fanfare of assembled bugles, and from out the group trotted a number of officers, who pulled their horses to their haunches in a display of military precision when less than ten yards from the little hill where the kaid stood. The ranking officer,

at a slow signal from the kaid, dismounted and climbed upward, carrying a heavy saber in both hands, and raising it above his head to his superior officer.

Dick felt that to follow the kaid and the newcomer into the headquarters tent would be an intrusion, so he remained quiet for the few minutes of their absence. When they emerged, the kaid was still talking, and the American was able to understand his commands:

"On this side of the river," the general was saying, "with all guns in the center, ammunition wagons parked close by for tonight. All outposts well out. Second line of sentries to intervene. All fires out early. Usual report to me in the morning."

The officer saluted, and went back to his waiting staff, while the kaid by Dick's side watched their departure. It was as if in the dust a city were springing into existence. There were sharp, confused calls, a babble of shouting, the cries of mule- and camel-drivers, the clank of accouterments, and under all the heavier clash of cannon being limbered and brought into position. Hundreds of fires sprang up, and, as the darkness increased, the men moving round them appeared black and deformed. The shadowy outlines of horses being led into the shallow stream massed themselves together, and were regularly disintegrated, and still, from the far distance, the rear guard of this strange army moved in, as though extending indefinitely from Mequinez, whence it had come.

"About twenty-five hundred all together," said the kaid, softly. "A thousand regulars from Mequinez, and fifteen hundred tribesmen who are always itching

for a fight, but this time are coming because they want a go at the Berbers. These fellows from the plains do not like the mountain men. Got several old grudges to settle. We ought to have a very pretty fight. Supper's ready. Let's go in. You'll see something worth while a little later on." The American was not sure, but thought he caught a chuckle of satisfaction.

The kaid was pleased to resume his taciturnity during



the meal, and Dick, rising from the table, went outside with his mind vaguely interested in what else might be forthcoming. He looked round their own little encampment in vain for Sidi-Suleyman, and was told by one of the troopers that his scar-faced friend was visiting the other camp, which was spread out before him like a panorama. The eminence on which the kaid's camp was located was not more than forty feet high, but, standing in isolation, it afforded an excellent view of the surrounding plain. Dick sat half-resting on his elbows, and watched the coming of the moon. The camp-fires below were dying out under the white light of the night,

and a glamour of mystery was enshrouding the distant view, when Sidi-Suleyman, hurrying noiselessly, passed by him toward the kaid's tent.

As if his arrival had communicated some interesting news, the camp below stirred in sudden excitement, and the men round him began asking one another what had happened. They were not kept long in doubt. Suleyman emerged, to hurry away again, and, before Dick realized it, another army was sweeping up through the night. It came painfully, as if utterly worn out with haste, and seemed to move like a huge, dismembered serpent of white. Its approach was not as spectacular as had been that of the men from Mequinez. Its officers climbed the hill slowly to receive their instructions from the kaid, and hurried stiffly away to carry out his orders.

Dick needed no explanation other than the camp gossip about him to know that some three thousand men, soldiers and followers, were arriving from Marakesh, to swell the kaid's forces. Now, he understood what the couriers had accomplished, and how rapidly, when need arose, the warriors of this barbaric old land could assemble for the fray.

For long hours after the kaid had calmly gone to sleep, the American watched the pictures of this quickly assembled army, each man of which would fight to the death to uphold the blue throne. No war of fanaticism this, where the faithful would be pitted against the unbeliever, and wherein death would be only a reward, leading the Mussulman straightway to the gates of

Paradise, but one wherein men would fight with equal desperation, tribe against tribe, to decide who should be accepted as the Sword of the Prophet, Commander of the Faithful, and Sultan of the realm.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

NEVER, until he witnessed that morning prayer, had Dick fully appreciated the grandeur of ceremony with which the Mussulman sanctified his adoration. Wherever he looked below, the figures of men bent forward and back, and over all came the call of the faith. Where yesterday had been an empty plain was now an encampment of fifty-five hundred men which the yellow current of the little river seemed to have cut off from its opposite bank. It was spotted with gorgeous color; here a division whose predominant tone was vermilion red, there one forming a green splotch; in the distance were men clad half in blue, and beyond them others striped with orange flame. As if to accentuate the differences in uniforms, the whole encampment was bordered in white, where fierce nomadic warriors, farmers and nondescripts had joined the force of battle, to test their steel against the mountain hordes. These were the men who had sworn to bend no neck to Berber rule.

The American felt very much alone in the midst of this warlike preparation, in which he had no part. He entered his tent, to find that sometime during his absence the kaid had arisen and disappeared. The orderly assigned to him appeared soon after with a smoking breakfast, which he ate hurriedly, his thoughts

centered on what might happen outside, no event of which he wished to miss.

For a full hour after he had finished his meal, Dick Whitney watched the movement, regretting that he could not visit that other camp, and annoyed that, so far on this day, he had not seen Sidi-Suleyman, who, he felt certain, would conduct him over the plain below.

As if in answer to this annoyance, a voice spoke so unexpectedly in his rear that he swung round with a start, to face the kaid's captain standing behind him.

"Would the captain like for to go to them camps?"

Dick, ignoring the broken English to which he had become accustomed, admitted that his desire led in that direction, and, accompanied by Sidi-Suleyman, forthwith made his way down the hill. On entering the outposts, he had expected nothing less than the fierce, questioning look that the followers of the prophet invariably bestow upon the Nazarene. What was his astonishment to be met by the officers, who promptly saluted him! As he advanced, the soldiers invariably stared at him respectfully, and lifted hands to turbans as punctiliously as they could have done had Kaid Clarke himself passed between their lines.

He was at a loss to understand their attitude, until he observed the evident pride with which his companion was escorting him, and then, suddenly, he understood that Sidi-Suleyman, as an advance agent, had explained to the arrivals that Allah was with them, inasmuch as the second Kaid Clarke, another great foreign kaid and master of war, had been brought to the scene, to fight for the honor of the Prophet.

Everywhere, he observed that the men, although displaying no rigid discipline, were wiry, clean and well kept, and that their arms were fairly modern. There was an atmosphere of alertness about them which indicated that in time of necessity they would prove rapid in action. Reasoning within himself, the American concluded that the religious spirit, coupled with their accouterment, should make them formidable soldiers.

In passing through the batteries, he shook his head in a dubious way. He had never seen such a mixture of guns. Some of them were very antiquated, one or two mortars suggesting the civil war in the United States. Farther on, he came upon two other mortars that were undoubtedly relics of some Spanish campaign, inasmuch as they were made of bronze, and profusely decorated and engraved. In all that row of artillery, he discovered a bare half-dozen of truly modern guns of the death-dealing quality, to which he, as an officer of an intensely modern army was accustomed. He came to the conclusion that here the small arms must be infinitely more efficient than the artillery, and he now understood the peculiar formation of Hamilton Clarke's camp. He had passed through the division comprising the Mequinez troops, skirted the base of the hill where the headquarters detachments were situated, and was well into the heart of the Marakesh reinforcements, when his attention, with that of others, was directed toward the river front. Mounting a cannon, that he might see above the heads of the intervening soldiers, he

stared as the others stared, across the little river. There, coming from the opposite side, at a distance of a mile or so, he saw a long sinuous column of men in white. From the excited shouts round him, he interpreted its meaning. The vanguard of the enemy had arrived. Buhammei was even more adroit than the kaid had believed possible.

With Sidi-Suleyman at his heels, the American retraced his steps, and hurried back to the hill crest, where a stocky figure in a white helmet was standing, as much alone as could have been Napoleon in any world-decisive battle. He stopped immediately behind his friend, feeling that he should not disturb this careful inspection. But the kaid, hearing the steps, turned quickly. His face was mobile with excitement, and his eyes were dancing as if with enjoyment. He took two brisk steps, and enthusiastically slapped the American on the shoulder.

"There they are!" he shouted. "There they are! Fine, isn't it? Fine! Buhammei's worth while! By George, he's a corker! Who the devil would have thought that he was clever enough to get together an army right under our noses, and spring it on us a full twenty-four hours before anybody could have believed it possible! Here! I want you to know something else!"

He shoved the binoculars into the captain's hand, pointed toward the distant column, and said:

"Notice that? Not a single thing there giving us an excuse to fire on them! Not a banner in sight! Under the law, I can no more go over there and dis-

perse them than I could a peaceful merchant's caravan!"

"What!" Dick exclaimed. "You don't mean to say that you are compelled to treat that as a peaceful gathering in time of war?"

"War? There is no war! There will be none until a *Jehad* is declared openly, until Buhammei flies the white flag, and appears beneath a red umbrella. They don't do things in this country as they do in others. We are the boy waiting for the other fellow to put a chip on his shoulder; but, when he does, by heavens, we'll knock it off."

The kaid was all enthusiasm, and Whitney was rapidly entering into like spirits. Looking through the binoculars as far as he could see, from the opposite plain clear back to the gap in the hills, he could observe no break in the line of Buhammei's followers. In the morning light, he could see them quite plainly, lithe, dark-skinned and proud in bearing, Berbers such as he had never met, the free men of the mountains, who had never been conquered, and who gave allegiance or insult as they wished. These were the men who, from the time of the great Edris, had been free rovers and lords of their own domain. Rugged as the mountains in which they abode, they had never paid other than wilful homage to any dynasty that claimed them for its own. For centuries, no Sultan, however powerful, had dared to invade their precincts without courteously asking permission from their sheiks. In their own territory were two shereefs, descendants of that anciently and widely famed Fatima, and no descendant of

the great Prophet has higher claims to pride of lineage than have they. This was to be the test. Either the son of the Berber maid should sit upon the throne in Fez, or they, proudly defiant, would die. Dick Whitney, captain in a foreign army and an unprejudiced observer, felt like echoing the sentiments of the brave little adventurer at his side, who had enthusiastically declared that it was to be a battle worth while and "fine."

The sun rose higher in its course, lifting wraiths, vibrant wraiths, hot and rippling, from the yellow sand. The noontime came with its prayerful hush. The young afternoon took on age, and hourly grew old. The shadows were no longer beneath their feet, but in lengthened stretch leaned toward the east; yet, that invading column was never broken. As if rooted to the spot, Kaid Clarke stood, regardless of the heat throughout the day, watching the inflow of that stream which he alone must stem. As it poured resistlessly along, like some sluggish stream of quicksilver, unbent and camped upon the broad plain beyond, the American saw that the kaid had become restless. Now and then, his binoculars swept the northern horizon, as if longing for sight of the legions from Rabat. Plainly, did this influx of mountain men continue, the kaid would be hopelessly outnumbered. And yet, above all those surging heads and springing tents, no banner fluttered in the evening breeze.

"Sidi!" the kaid at last called, sharply. "Send me men — good men!" and Dick saw him wheel quickly

into his tent. The American was no longer restrained by a feeling of intrusion. He followed his friend inside. Clarke looked up with a pleasant expression.

"Glad you came," he said, brusquely. "You act kind of stand-offish. You're with me in this affair, aren't you? Why in the devil don't you give me your advice, man? I need you! You're the only one of my kind that happens to be round here at the moment. As our old friend Marshall would say, 'We've got a hell of a fight on hand.'"

Dick threw his helmet into the corner of the tent, and, had it not been for his training, would have given an exultant shout. The mark of confidence told him that, from that time henceforth, there would never be barrier of reservation between him and the kaid.

"Looks to me," he said, "so far as I can discover, that we've got to run, or get help."

"Just what I've been thinking," the kaid assented.

He leaned his chin on his elbow, and looked across the half-burned candle into the American's face.

"You see," he said, "when I sent to Mequinez, Marakesh and Rabat, those fellows would do just as I said, without any delay. The Rabat men, by forced marches, can't possibly get here within the next forty-eight hours. Over at Fez, it's different."

He grinned as if perpetrating a joke.

"There's a grand vizier, a minister of war, a full *Maghzen* and the petulant Sultan himself, all of whom have their little say. His nibs, the grand vizier, and his lordship, the minister of war, aren't breaking their

necks to assist any campaign of mine. They don't like me, because His Majesty, the Sultan, has overruled them whenever we came to a clash. I asked for fifteen hundred men and a battery of twelve machine-guns. You see for yourself, they haven't come. If they had sent the guns and plenty of cartridges, I shouldn't care, but now —" He threw up his hands in an eloquent gesture of disgust.

"Send for them!" Dick suggested, impetuously.

"Tell them they've got to come, or we'll be licked!"

The kaid answered by thrusting his last dispatch across the table. The American shook his head.

"I can't read that stuff," he said, shoving it back.

The kaid laughed.

"I'll interpret it," he said, and he read aloud the following:

By four different couriers, I have appealed to his excellency, the minister of war, for my own division of Khaki guards and for twelve of the new guns which I bought and for whose handling I have trained my men. They have not come. With a total of fifty-five hundred fighting men, more than half of whom are undisciplined, I am confronted by at least ten thousand Berbers and men of the mountain tribes under the leadership of the best general that has ever made pretense to the sacred throne of Your Majesty. Now I am appealing to your Imperial Majesty direct and on the honor of my service to Your Majesty and by the history of my past record I say to you that without help we are lost. I send this under that seal of the Prophet which you gave me to be used

in dire emergency only, knowing that you, my master, will act for the best. I say to you whom I have faithfully and earnestly served that a single hour's delay may change the whole destiny of this nation which you have honored by ruling.

HAMILTON CLARKE,

Kaid of His Imperial Majesty's Troops.

To

His Most August Highness,

Sultan of Morocco,

Commander of the Faithful, etc., etc.

The sonorous, high-sounding words, theatrical in expression, had they not been tragic in portent, died away. The American understood their meaning, and knew that this English adventurer, courageous soldier that he was, had come to the place where his back was against the wall.

Without their noticing it, a breeze, light, soft and seductive, as if from off the fields of Araby, had entered through the curtained door. It seemed a part of the stillness of the night, even the camps having gone to rest, to the stolid, swaying accompaniment of weary camels' heads. It lacked but the aromatic odor of spice to carry one back to the peaceful dreams of romantic Bagdad and the Arabian nights. Yet, it twisted the candle's flame into a writhing gnome, of which the reflections threw wavering shadows on the blackened walls of the tent — the shadows of the two foreigners who were playing this game of *Kismet*.

The kaid's face had lost its smile. It was grave and distressed. Both elbows were on the table now, and,

with tragic eyes, he was staring at the American, who understood.

"It — is — just — that — bad," he said, softly. "Whitney, I have tried in the last five hours to convince myself that it wasn't so, but, by God, if we don't win this fight, it means — well, it isn't what it means to us, you and me. But it means that my sister and your lady of the heart, Charlotte Marshall, will fall into the hands of this merciless barbarian as sure as there's a God in heaven. If we can't hold them off, Fez is lost!"

The trim figure of the American captain seemed to tense itself, as though anticipating such a catastrophe. The kaid, as if over-taxed by emotion, suddenly relaxed, and, still resting his head upon his hands, ran his fingers through his hair. For the first time since they had known each other, the American captain became the dominant spirit.

"They sha'n't do it!" he said. "They sha'n't do it!"

He stood upon his feet, and, with an outstretched forefinger, tapped upon the table to punctuate his words. "We can do this: we can retreat to Fez itself, if we have to fight a running fight every foot of the way. They've got no guns! They can shoot no better than we, and discipline, after all, is the thing that counts! Good God, man! You've heard of Sheridan and Winchester!"

The kaid's fist came down with a bang upon the flimsy table, and the candle danced and guttered as if about to expire.

"I have," he said; "I have! But you'll permit me to say, I'm devilish glad I've got a Sheridan here with me, tonight!"

As if abashed by this display of feeling, each of the officers subsided awkwardly, and dropped back into his seat. It was easier to discuss the possibilities of battle as laid out by Sandhurst and West Point than to admit their own sentiments and emotions.

"We are on the inner side," the kaid said hopefully, "and have that advantage, in case we have to back off."

"And have the guns," the American again reminded.

For several minutes, each was absorbed in his own thoughts, then, as if by common impulse, they walked out of the tent, and stood on the very crest of the hill, staring off at the distant camp-fires of the enemy, or back at the encampment of their own followers.

At the foot of the hill, distant, yet audible and distinct, came the challenge of a sentinel: "Who travels in the night? In the name of the Prophet, answer!"

"A rider from Fez, with messages for his excellency, the Kaid Clarke."

"Pass rider, and accept a guard."

The two officers walked to the edge of the bluff, and awaited the courier, each hoping that he brought news of the relief, which would turn the fate of the battle. The man handed his packet to the kaid, and was dismissed; and together Clarke and Whitney hurried inside, to learn what message the courier had brought. With hasty fingers, the kaid broke the seal, and tore open the packet. It contained but two letters, one addressed to

“Richard Whitney, Esq.,” in the consul’s well-known chirography, and the other an official document addressed in Arabic to the kaid.

Dick, in the excitement of the moment, held his letter in his hand, and studied the kaid’s face as the Englishman bent far over, deciphering the Arabic contents. The reader’s face grew grim and white as he crumpled the sheet in his fingers, leaned across the table, and said:

“From Fez, there is scant hope — only this: ‘His Majesty, the Sultan, will himself lead the relief.’ He has overridden the *Maghzen*, and will come to our aid; but it is impossible for them to arrive in less than thirty hours. The ministers have tried to ship me. A leader who moves as fast as does Buhammei will have played his hand before help can come, and — ”

“It’s up to us,” the American finished.

The kaid jerked his dispatch-book from his pocket, and, reading aloud as he wrote, indicated another appeal for aid, while Dick stood quietly by. The message finished, Clarke walked out of the tent, personally to select a bearer of the message. Then, at last, Dick absently looked at the letter in his hand.

CHAPTER TWENTY

IN the dim light of the candle, which was not strong enough to rob the white tent-covering of the light from without that flooded the abodes of two armies, the long sandy reaches and dwarfed verdure, Dick tore open the letter with the big seal, and read:

MY DEAR BOY:

I'm calling you that still, and that you're going to be as long as you live—as long as I live, and if you outlast me as you probably will, you'll know it after I'm dead, because I've lived for years with no ideas but for you and the little girl, and made money for one as well as the other. I'm telling you this because I want you to know that what I've got to write don't come easy. I haven't done nothing in my life that hurt as badly as this I've got to do. I've worked at it and tried for most of the time since you and the kaid pulled out, to find words to make it easier so you'll understand. I ain't much of a letter-writer nohow. You know that, and knowing it will understand what a tough job it's been for me; but there ain't no use in fiddling round with a sore tooth, because it's better to have it yanked out even if it hurts a little harder for an instant and so I'm going to write and hurt you to save you from being hurt worse.

Dick, boy, you can't marry our little Charlie. She don't love you that way.

Last night after you and the kaid left we were all

mighty lonesome, and Margaret had a bad headache and went to bed and we didn't see her any more that evening. So me and Charlie sat out on the front porch all alone and feeling pretty sober like. Somehow or another as I get older, I see some things always a little plainer and some things always a little darkly like lights and shadows out on our own hills, away out home. This night I found out I'd been a fool for not seeing some things sooner.

Charlie was sitting over by herself and my cigar had gone out. The cigars you get here in this cussed country are always going out, and you always hate yourself for lighting them up again. I threw this one away and as I sat there thinking about most everything I had a hunch all of a sudden that she was feeling badly. I saw her white handkerchief going up to her face and suspected she was crying about something. I called her over and held her in my lap and patted her just the way I used to do when she was a right small child, without saying anything, and somehow or nother it felt as if she was just a little girl again, running round in her little pinnyfores and telling me everything she knew. I thought maybe she was lonely because you'd gone; but, Dick, it wasn't that. The alphabet by which we read other folks' feelings is a mighty small one after all even though most of its letters are very plain.

By and by, when she'd quit sobbing, I said to her, "Why, what's the mattle, little girl? You ain't lost no dolls nor nothing like that, have you — and you ain't so old that you can't tell your old dad about it?"

She snuggled up into my arms a mite closer and put her face up against my neck until I could feel the breath of her sobs dying out; but for a long time she didn't talk. I felt as if she'd grown away from me somehow, or as

if there'd been something come between us which I couldn't bust through. It was like I'd fallen down some way — me that tried to take her mother's place with her, to know all her baby thoughts and teach her to open her heart wide on all things. I say I felt like I'd been going it on the blind after all, an ignorant, self-satisfied old fool that couldn't see or understand. When she talked I knew it, Dick, and the whole trouble's been my fault.

You and she grew up together and you do love each other. Of that I'm sure. When you went away it was always the same. She was Charlie to you and you was Dick to her. It got kind of natural to think you were going to be together all your lives. Natural for her and you and me to think so and to lay all our stakes that way. I told you so when you came back, being always a fool and not thinking for a minute that you was nothing but a boy and she nothing but a girl after all. That was a long time ago. I don't suppose you've changed any. You act just the way you always did; but Charlie's been out in the world and she's met other men and she's matured and now she knows the difference in loves. It was my dream then to have you two married and my disappointment now that you ain't going to be, but no one but God can rule hearts, and sometimes I think He's too busy to look after all of them.

Dick, she told me these things lying there in my arms after she'd sobbed herself quiet and the little gates that have been built up between all her womanhood and me had been opened so's she could talk the way she did fifteen years ago. She told me because she wanted my advice just as she did in them other years. Charlie loves you more than any other living thing; but in one way, and that's like a great big brother that used to tote her round

on his shoulders, used to help her up on to her pony, used to punch any other kid's head that was rude to her and used to cuddle her when she was tired. She wants to keep you that way, and she loves you so much that she would never tell you for fear it would break your heart.

I'm trying to spare her trouble, boy, even if it's almost as hard for me to say these things as it would be for her. I'm doing it because neither you nor me want to ever see her cry from sorrow or loneliness and that's what life would be if you married her when she didn't love you the way husbands and wives must love each other. One must be sure. It's unsurety that makes divorce courts, the only businesses in the world that never fluctuate and always have a little more to do than they can attend to. It's being sure that makes one man worth more than all the whole world to one woman, or one woman worth more than life itself to one man. I've learned this lesson better than most men. It's the thing which has made my birthdays blazes on a trail, the passing of each being just a lap farther toward the place the woman I love is waiting.

There's another thing I've learned — that some way or nother I haven't made good. I can't understand how, but it's so, because I think Charlie has met somebody that taught her the inside of her own heart and yet she didn't tell me that it was so, or if so who it was. Maybe she will some day and then you and I must find out if he's good enough for her. I asked her if she had met such a man, and she didn't answer; but I knew by the way she held her face against mine it was so. I asked her who it was, and she shook her head. I asked her if he'd ever said anything to her, and she said "No," and that she

wasn't sure even that he loved her enough to have ever said anything.

I thought at first I wouldn't write you but would wait and tell you when you came back. Then when I thought it all over, I couldn't bear to see you coming home with your eyes glad to take our Charlie into your arms, without knowing that old conditions were upset and can't be mended. I'm making it plain so you can do as you think best — either write and tell her you know all about it and that she's free, or wait till you can talk to her.

This is the longest letter I ever wrote, Dick, and I've done it because I think so much of you and of her and because it's one hell of a mixup that's got to be straightened out. How it'll end, the Lord only knows.

Been hearing whispers round Fez that the pretender's army is coming this way. Hope you and the kaid don't get into trouble with them because we want you both to come back. Reckon by this time you've learned to think a heap of him. Took me a long time to scratch through his shell and find out that inside of his stiff English ways, he's all man. Give him my best.

Yours sorrowfully,

ROBERT MARSHALL.

Before Dick Whitney had finished reading, the Englishman had returned; but in the overpowering rush of conflicting emotions, the American was unaware of the other's presence. He stepped backward as though dazed by a terrific blow, until colliding with the rail of his cot, he sank down upon it, staring absently at the sand beneath his feet. Now that relinquishment had been thrust upon him, he wondered whether or not Charlotte, his playmate, his foster sister, his sweetheart, was,

indeed, more to him than he had thought. In a turmoil of mind, he re-read the letter.

He was free! No tie of honor bound him! Yet, despite the consul's kindly words, he felt as though he were cut off and cast out of the Marshall family, which for so many years had claimed him, and which he had claimed as his own.

Again staring at the floor, but looking into dim past distances, another picture was visualized, grew clear and distinct: the Garden of Fate, a moonlit pergola, Margaret Clarke's face, and a vague something of yearning in her eyes, when she turned to him for that final good-bye. The very warmth and softness of her breath, the odor of her hair mingled with the less-delicate perfume of budding magnolias and the wafted scent of oriental perfumes from neighboring terraces! The soft splash of waters, dropping like rain in fountain basins, the call of night birds, and the softened sounds of ancient Fez mingling with a tender voice that had betrayed itself in the words, "I should sorrow to know that the world no longer held the most loyal gentleman I have ever known."

He was free — free to go to her, when this gage of strength was over, and to ask her what she had meant, to ask her if she could be his own. And Charlotte would be, as she had always been, his sister.

He lifted himself to his feet, threw back his head, and breathed the night air deeply into his lungs. He was like one from whose shoulders a load had been lifted, and the way opened for easy travel. He was aroused to a consciousness of his surroundings by a sight of

the kaid's distressed and inquiring face. It all came back to him — the night, the tent, the conflicting armies, the barbaric land, and the little English adventurer, who, now more than ever, had become his friend. Then, suddenly, illumination came. It was as if the trivial things past and gone — a look from this same little Englishman, an adoration of eye, a tenderness of speech, an unfailing courtesy, a marked delicacy of manner, all bestowed upon Charlotte, his foster sister — now recurred to him in a palpable summary of explanatory truth.

Dick towered above the table, resting his weight upon the knuckles of both hands, and thrusting his head forward toward his companion.

"You!" he said. "You are the man!"

The kaid, as if accused of something unmerited, or suddenly confronted by a friend gone mad, leaped to his feet so abruptly that his camp-stool was thrown backward beneath his cot.

"I — I? Good God, Dick — Captain Whitney — what do you mean?"

The kaid had drawn himself involuntarily to an attitude of defense, as if anticipating an attack from the stalwart American, who was staring at him with wide eyes and close-shut lips.

Quite slowly, Whitney held the letter out, and said:

"Read!"

The Englishman took the missive unhesitatingly, and, leaning over the table where the candlelight shone strong, slowly absorbed the homely words of the old cattleman. Masked as he was in habitual restraint,

his face broke into softened lines, and, when he looked up, his eyes were glad, yet sorrowful.

"Whitney," he faltered, "Whitney, God knows I wish I were 'the man'! If I knew that were true, all this out here —" he waved his hand in an all-embracing gesture toward the outer armies of the night — "would be as nothing." His fingers swept up to a fearless, trembling gesture above his head. "Only God and she know whether I am, but this I say to you who had the envied place, that, if I were, neither King nor Sultan could take her from me."

The bulldog defiance in his conclusion was almost like a challenge, and the American, reading the hot love flaming through the eyes, knew the truth, and understood, too, why Charlotte had chosen this man as her "god of heart's desire."

The adventurer drew back, as if anticipating a blow from the hand that was swiftly stretched across the table toward his own. He was bewildered, dazed and dumb in this unexpected manifestation of friendship. For an instant, he backed off, until his feet came in contact with the fallen camp-stool. Then, he halted with head thrust forward and frowning brows, endeavoring to interpret the American's attitude. Little by little, he relaxed as the unwavering hand, open and congratulatory, steadily reached out.

"You mean — ?" he said.

"That, if I could have my wish, that wish which is closest to my heart, I could ask nothing more than this."

There was sincerity in the voice; there was sincerity

in the eyes; there was sincerity in the open hand, still outheld to meet a friend's. Almost as if doubting that any man under such circumstances could honestly wish him so great a happiness, the kaid stepped forward, his feet dragging in the sand, and, with one last look to reassure himself, clasped the proffered palm.

For an instant, the two stood dumb, and then, as if the contact of flesh against flesh had brought with it understanding, walked round to the end of the table, and stood more closely together.

"I — well — somehow, I can't talk about it, now; I'm afraid — afraid you wouldn't understand," the American stammered. "But, you see, if you knew all, you would appreciate that what I say carries no disrespect for Charlotte Marshall, whom — I tell you the truth — I love. We stumbled blindly like little children into a position that wasn't true. He wanted it — good old Bob, I mean — wanted it because it was a kind of a dream of his. He couldn't understand that Charlie and I were like brother and sister, that we had grown so used to doing what he wanted, and that we loved him so much, that we obeyed. Why, Clarke, there isn't anything in the world that I want more than to see that little sister happy. It couldn't be with me! And, if I were to choose for her tonight, I give you my word, I would say what I said before — you are the man!"

The little kaid choked, stammered, bit his lips, and then, as if ashamed of having betrayed his emotions, released his hand, and, with painstaking effort, snuffed the candle, which at that moment required no attention. He fumbled round on the floor, got his camp-

stool, and, with much more care than he had ever before shown, readjusted it beside the table. The American, smiling at the general's embarrassment, resumed his seat, gathered together the leaves of the letter, folded them, and slipped them in his pocket.

"I say," Clarke said, "would you mind giving me that letter. I know it's a deucedly impertinent thing to ask, but — damn it, man! — don't you see what it means to me?"

As a final seal of their friendship, the American took the sheets from his pocket, looked at them reluctantly, and finally, as if presenting a gift of great price, gave them to the kaid, who said never a word; only, slipped them into a linen dispatch-envelope, applied wax to taper, and sealed the flap with his ring. He pulled open his tunic, unbuttoned an inner pocket and thrust the envelope inside.

"As I said before," he began in his unemotional voice, "I'm afraid you and I have got a hell of a fight on hand, tomorrow! Let's go out and look at them, old chap." He thrust his hand exuberantly under the American's elbow, and led the way out for a last inspection of the huge sleeping camps, the somber, silent mountains, the undulating plain and the coldly disinterested moon and stars which shone above, holding the repellent hands of infinite space between them and the paltry passions and loves of those below.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE kaid had confidently predicted that the battle would begin at an early hour of the morning, and was nonplused when, after the first prayers were over, there was still no sign of engagement. No banners floated over the Berber camp, and no *Jehad* had been declared. The kaid began to wonder if in truth Buhammei was there with his followers, and yet it seemed certain that some masterful mind must have held the troops in restraint; otherwise, these wild hill-men would have attacked.

Throughout the whole forenoon, the kaid's army rested under arms, squatting round like gossiping idols. The batteries had been placed, the pieces loaded, and the ammunition served. The kaid himself had supervised this, and, in consultation with his subordinate officers, had outlined the plan of battle. The stream had banks sufficiently high and steep to form an admirable barrier for some distance. Further back, in the direction of Telaya, and still well within the camp of the Marakesh division, was the most accessible place for fording the stream, and here the kaid had planted his most efficient battery, consisting of four 8.8 howitzers, throwing thirty-pound shells. Back of these, again, were the best mounted of his cavalrymen, to be held in reserve for a charge across the stream, in case the tide of battle swung northward. He was thus pre-

pared to make a flank movement under protection of his own guns, at any time the opportunity might arise.

In a broad crescent, forming the rear edge of his forces, were the tribesmen.

"You see," said the kaid to Dick, standing on the little hilltop, and pointing out his formation, "there will be two fierce points of attack, if Buhammei is the man I believe him to be. Sooner or later, he will attempt that ford. If he can get possession of it, he will have us hemmed in by the stream. So, I have made certain that he can not take the ford. Now, to go far enough to the north to find another similar ford, will mean a running fight. We can stand that better than they can, because our discipline and organization are better. This stream becomes almost a river in width some five miles below here, toward Fez. If it comes to a running fight, we should be able to hold our own for the next ten or twelve hours."

"And then?" questioned the American.

"God help us, if the machine-guns don't come."

The afternoon came, and still there were no signs of preparation to be seen in the enemy's camp. At two o'clock, the armies were still lying like a pair of bulldogs waiting for some sign to grapple. For Dick, the strain was intense, but the kaid appeared calm and unworried.

"Every hour's delay is for our benefit," he chuckled; "but I can't see yet why in the devil they don't run up the little flag of the new Prophet, and set upon us."

Leaving Dick on watch with the binoculars in front of their tent, the kaid went inside, threw himself down

on the cot, and calmly fell asleep. It was just three o'clock when the camp on the far side sprang into a sudden frenzy of excitement. Dick called his friend, who ran out, took one look through his binoculars, and then ran back, down to the end of the crest of the little hill, where he threw up his hands. Instantly, the camp below sprang into sudden activity, the soldiers seizing their arms, and coming to formation, the men behind the batteries standing in readiness.



The officers now discovered the reason for the delay in attack. Coming round a bend in the hill was a white-clad figure mounted on a horse, surrounded by men carrying banners; and, as the emblem of authority, the huge red umbrella, immemorial emblem of office, was being held high aloft over the newcomer, whom the kaid concluded to be none other than Buhammei. But that was not all. Trundling behind, dragged by camels and mules, came a battery of guns. The two friends counted each as it appeared, until it became apparent that Buhammei had possessed himself of twelve pieces

of artillery, which, they decided, were nearly as modern as the best of their own.

In strange contrast to the Sultan's army, which stood quiet and firm, the forces of the pretender had resolved themselves into a wildly riding host, their caftans fluttering behind them in the wind, and their arms brandished above their heads. This continued for perhaps ten minutes, then, as if eager to close the issue, the entire army assumed a formation with the banners at the front. The red umbrella had been furled, but the officers were quite certain that Buhammei was the center of the group in the far rear.

A group of aids for the kaid was standing immediately behind the two officers on the knoll, and below Dick could see that the corps of officers, surrounded by their own groups of subalterns, kept looking upward at the little Englishman, as if eagerly awaiting his command. Finally, a shout, so fierce and wild that it was wafted loudly across the intervening mile of space, gave ample notice that the charge was on.

Sharply, the whole line of advance started into motion, the horses trotting leisurely at the take-off, and then, when some few hundred yards had been passed, breaking into a gallop. Dick could have shouted with exultation. There was something so splendidly barbaric in that onrush of thousands of horsemen massed that it suggested a charge of Saracens from out the bygone centuries.

Evidently, they had not learned the value of open skirmish fighting, such as is customary in modern armies,

The kaid had turned, and was giving rapid orders, and Dick faced about long enough to learn the cause. Their own tribesmen were mounting, and threatened to break loose in a frenzy, to meet the army of the pretender in the style in which they had invariably been accustomed to fight.

A huge puff of smoke, from the rear of Buhammei's army, bellied up into the air, and a few instants later the sound of the report came hollowly across the intervening space. A shell had gone screaming high above their heads, to fall hundreds of yards beyond the farthest line of their camp. The kaid grinned appreciatively, and said:

"That tells the story. They don't know how to aim their guns. It will take those fellows a long time to get the range, and, unless I lose my guess, by that time the battle will be decided."

He whirled, and threw up his hand as if by a pre-arranged signal. Before Dick caught its significance, a terrible rolling explosion whipped from every gun of their own batteries, of which in all there were thirty pieces. The white formation, charging so resistlessly toward them, broke into ragged, confused gaps, and the sheiks appeared to have much effort to reform their lines of battle. Here and there, where the shells had been most effective, Dick thought he discovered a wild confusion, but the white, thundering line never halted. The Berbers wildly shouted their battle cry, and began, even at that distance to fire their rifles.

"Ah," he heard the kaid exclaim, "just as I thought. They've got Martinis!" He turned, and

threw up his hand again. Another volley ripped along the entire line, and, as it was immediately followed by others as rapidly as the men could reload their guns, Dick knew that from now on the firing would be continuous. Owing to the speed of the onslaught, the gunners were not firing so successfully because of the constantly changing range. Buhammei's battery was steadily banging away, but, so far, had not placed a single effective shot.

Back of the charging tribesmen on the grass-splotched sandy plain, white figures and horses could be seen twisting and writhing here and there, while many riderless animals ran wildly backward and forward. Up to this time, there had been no rifle discharged from the Sultan's army, although desultory firing, mostly without effect, had marked the advance of Buhammei's forces. Now, as Buhammei's troops approached the sandy level back of the stream, along the entire line of the Sultan's army a rifle fire broke out, with what seemed to the American a fairly precise delivery. For a moment, it appeared as if, crowded on by their own weight, Buhammei's men and horses would fill the brook to the brim, and ride across over their own dead. Then, in a splendid turn, the whole front swirled like a whirlpool, which in its revolution carried the white legions back from the zone of rifle fire.

The kaid's batteries were still firing into the white mass, but now, owing to the rapidity of the motion, their shells seemed badly timed. For so long a time the shrilling shells of Buhammei's batteries had passed over their heads that Dick had grown unconscious of



their noise. Suddenly, he was thrown to his feet, and, almost immediately afterward, heard an explosion behind him. Half - dazed, he got to his knees, and looked round.

The kaid, too, was regaining his feet.

"They're getting the range," he said, imperturbably.

Dick looked back to where the shell had exploded, and saw that it

had dropped at the edge of the little camp on the hill, with serious effect. One man was staggering blindly forward, with blood streaming from his face, but, before he had gone far, suddenly pitched prone upon the ground, with hands outstretched. Another, still conscious, was feebly wriggling his mangled body round, so that he might die facing that mysterious east, the Mecca of the Mussulman's God. The American, still on his knees, stared down over the surrounding plain. Everywhere were other to one of the tents, others twisting convulsively little spots in suggestive motion: a man supporting an on the ground, still others lying in deadly stillness. The agonized screams of wounded horses, the frenzied shouts of the tribesmen in the rear, who were impatient

to move to the front, and the shrill commands of officers holding their men steadfast, made a bedlam of sounds penetrating the constant boom of artillery. Buhammei's army had found the range.

Immediately behind him, Dick heard stentorian yells, and, running back to the edge of the bluff, he discovered Sidi-Suleyman, who was directing a force of men intent on dragging a heavy 4.7 howitzer gun up the sharp incline. The American did not interrupt the scar-faced captain, but the latter turned, and gave a friendly grin.

"Pretty soon I stop them," he said, and then whirled back, to deluge the unfortunate soldiers with his choicest epithets. Dick, unable to stand in idleness, ran down, and caught hold of the rope, tugging mightily with the rest. They found breath to give him a gasping cheer, and, as if his presence had renewed their strength, brought the gun up the slope with a final rush. They shoved it forward, until it stood almost in front of the headquarters tent, and Clarke looked round and nodded approvingly. The battery men jerked open the breech, and threw in a long, shining sixty-pound shell, and, to Dick's surprise, Sidi-Suleyman strode in to aim the gun. The men sprang back to avoid the immediate concussion.

Clarke, staring steadily through his binoculars, gave a sententious direction: "A little short, Sidi. Elevate her about a degree."

Up to this time, the American had not been aware that this strange scar-faced Arab was also an expert gunner. But, now, when he saw the business-like way in

which Sidi caught the sights, he recognized a trained marksman.

Again, the gun leaped back, and this time the kaid wheeled round with exultation on his face.

"Two guns out of business over there," he said, lowering his binoculars. "Good work, my men — good work!"

Almost before the words had died away, the Arab was again taking sight. As the third shot screamed out, the kaid handed the binoculars to Sidi, who had run to a position close beside him, as though eager to know of his success.

"Remarkable shot, that!" the kaid said, turning to Dick. "Nearly cleaned that battery out. Those fellows over there made a big mistake. Their guns are too close together. At all events, there's no one round them, now."

Dick, in watching the battery, had for the moment lost sight of the white riders, but now, warned by the shouts suddenly arising on every hand, saw that they had formed again, and were charging, although with a less-solid front than in the first wild onrush. Neither rifle fire nor shrapnel kept them from coming on. Desperately, they drove down upon the stream, and then, showing prearrangement, narrowed down to a blunt apex, which suddenly drove its horses forward toward the guns of the ford. Kaid Clarke, recognizing a crisis, leaped toward the edge of the bluff, and ran down, thrusting men right and left in order to gain the immediate scene of action. For one instant, Dick hesitated, then, mad with battle-lust, plunged after.

Down by the guns guarding the ford were the choicest of the Marakesh men. Into the ford, regardless of their own dropping men, plunged the mountain riders. Dick had no well-defined idea of what happened.

For an interminable time, the battle seemed raging backward and forward over a narrow space. Once, Buhammei's men were on top of the battery, and, for an instant, had possession of the guns. Dick heard the kaid shouting mad orders, and felt his own throat hoarse, before he realized that he, too, had been yelling at the top of his voice. It had become a hand-to-hand conflict. He fought his way through to the nearest gun, and saw that a shell was in it, but that the breech had not been closed. He jammed it shut, and was attempting to discharge it, when something rushed upon him, almost throwing him to the ground. A fierce tribesman, with a broken scimitar, was in the act of striking him. He caught the man's wrist, rove to and fro for a moment, and then succeeded in dragging a pistol from his holster. He had no knowledge of firing, but, instead, felt a curious interest in the way the mad face before him was suddenly distorted into a look of agony, and slipped backward, and a limp body fell across the gun itself. He remembered discharging the gun, but, to save his life, he could not explain why, in that moment of frenzy, he took up the cry of those round him, and shouted, "*Bismillah! Allah wahid!*" He was not aware that he himself had turned the tide of battle, and repulsed the charge, until the kaid beat him enthusiastically on the back, and shouted in his ear:

"God! What did I tell you! A man at my back! Give it to them!" And he was gone again.

Dick discovered, after a while, that the stream before him was nearly dammed with dead and dying men; that all around him was terrible proof of the fray, and that the men of Marakesh still held the ford. Buhammei's troops had been repulsed, and in wild disorder were riding backward to safety. It was as if he had been absorbed in a terrible dream, in which, for untold ages, he had fired a gun — reloaded and fired — reloaded and fired — pausing to take mechanical aim at intervals, but always chained to the gun.

Now, relaxed, drenched with perspiration, blood-stained from a slight wound on his face, and exhausted, he leaned back against the long, gray barrel of the piece. It was hot to the touch.

Men from the other guns, fierce and dark-skinned, bearing marks of battle, some of them stanching their wounds, rushed up to him. One of them, whom he now recalled as the captain of the battery, threw both arms round his neck, and called him brother; then, backing off, the Moor addressed the others, saying:

"He is one of us! Great is the Prophet! The Nazarene has found the light. Did he not shout: 'In the name of God, there is but one God!' as he fired his gun?"

Dick broke away from the friendly manifestation, and started toward the hill. Climbing up its shoulder, he nearly collided with Sidi-Suleyman, who was plunging downward, but who paused long enough to shout over his shoulder:

“The kaid want you — quick!”

Panting with exertion, Dick came up to the crest of the hill, and was astonished at what he saw. Service tents had been struck, and men in an apparent madness of haste were mounting their horses. The kaid, motionless, save when waving a hand to emphasize some order, was standing on the very brink of the bluff, with his white helmet jammed down over his eyes. Dick paused to look out across the broad stretch of plain toward the enemy. In a solid body and riding hard, Buhammei's men had swung round to the north.

Dick whirled back for another look at their own forces, and saw that on the immediate bank of the stream was nothing but a madly rushing ribbon of white. The tribesmen's time had come. Already, the batteries from Mequinez were in motion, the mule-drivers urging their animals with whip and spur to greatest effort. The green caftans of the whole division were surging along toward the north, and behind them was a huge blotch of red, where another division was taking to the saddle. Bugles were calling other horsemen to mount, and the whole army was suddenly leaping, like hounds unleashed, to the next point of contact. His own impatient orderly approached him, holding his horse. The kaid was already swinging into his saddle.

“Come on!” he yelled, sighting the American. “We've got the best of them here, and they're going to try to beat us to that ford, five miles above. If any number of them have been sent there in advance, our work is cut out for us.”

Dick vaulted into the saddle, and his horse floundered down the hill, close behind the kaid. The little Englishman, preceded by Sidi-Suleyman and a corps of aids, who continually shouted "*Balak! Balak!*"—"Make way!" headed away from the stream and out into the plain until they gained the outskirts of the moving throng, and then, with reckless speed, raced their horses to gain, if they could, the head of the column. Try as they might, they failed to get the lead. Their horses were lathering under them, but still they pressed forward, knowing that they must cover the perilous and crucial distance, when there smote upon their ears the continuous, snapping report of rifle fire in advance. Within the next two minutes, men in full retreat began to ride back toward them. The column of tribesmen was doubling on itself. The kaid was now viciously spurring his horse, and shouting in Arabic to the fugitives in an endeavor to turn them. Always, Dick plunged after, and once, taking time to look back, discovered that their undisciplined followers were rallying to a further resistance. There was an interminable interim, in which Clarke and the American rushed backward and forward among the wild riders of the plains, trying to restore order; and, at length, the wavering column halted, piled up on itself, and displayed a formidable battle-front. A clear open space lay beyond, where were the Berber horsemen and their allies.

Buhammei had proved a better general than any one could have guessed! With his vastly superior force, he had been able to spare men for battle, while at the same time hurling legion after legion to the upper

ford, to possess and hold it for the crossing of his army.

In the fore ranks of both armies was now a waiting silence. In the rear of each, stretching off into unknown distances, were the shouts of men hurrying to the front. It was quite plain now that, owing to this new advantage of position, together with the disparity in numbers, there could be scarcely any doubt as to which side would prove victorious. It was Buhammei's battle.

The kaid, sitting stolidly on his horse by Dick's side, was swearing a long string of hard British oaths as continuously as if they were Moslem prayers. The shadows had lengthened, until the two confronting armies were outlined in long, wavering silhouettes upon the sand. And, then, with incomparable stateliness, there passed out in front of the enemy's rank a white-clad figure, on a splendidly caparisoned horse. It lifted a sword on high, and, for the first time, the American was conscious of the hour: It was sunset.

"*Allah il Allah!*" Buhammei shouted; and the cry was taken up far back along the lines. The kaid sprang from his horse, and Dick, recognizing the call to *Mueddin*, did likewise. Both armies prostrated themselves upon the sand. Opponents, yet kindred in race and faith, they declared a truce in that magic cry of the religion that held them all. The kaid had lifted his helmet, and was standing so close to Dick that the latter heard his fervent whisper:

"By heavens, we've won! They'll fight no more tonight, and, if His Majesty keeps his word, by dawn the machine-guns will be here. Morocco may be saved!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

IT was as the kaid predicted: Secure in his belief that he had the army of the Sultan at his mercy, Buhammei's forces stretched slowly out, until they had thrown themselves in the form of a crescent, with one of its points at the ford, and the other far out upon the plain. In the swift tropical night, the campfires leaped into glowing patches of flame, and the shouts of the muleteers took on a soft and melancholy music of their own.

With a sense of having been beaten, the kaid's army doubled back upon itself for at least a mile, grim and taciturn. For hours, the soft rumble of cannon over the hard roads and the swaying clank of harness told that the batteries were coming up to take position for another day. White, shadowy figures moving in the dusk that preceded the moon, wandered restlessly like distressed spirits through the night. In the heart of this strange, barbaric encampment, the headquarters-tent had again lifted itself above the sands, and from its peak, drooped idly, in heavy, stagnant folds, the banner of His Majesty. Weary men, fatigued by effort, without awaiting the evening meal, threw themselves upon their caftans to rest. The groans of the wounded, varied by the occasional anguished shriek of some one whose soul was tearing forth from its shell, lent a sad monotone to the night.

Dick ate his supper alone. It was hard and scanty fare. The kaid was out, restlessly studying the ground over which he knew the battle would be resumed at sunrise. The American stepped out in front of the tent, to the campfire, in the light of which Sidi-Suleyman was stitching up a gaping wound on his horse's hip. An orderly was holding the shivering animal in subjection.

"Pretty good fight, eh, I think," the Arab said, when he saw that the American was back of him. "We lick him yet, I think, eh?"

"Certainly, we shall," Dick assented, but with considerable more conviction in his words than belief in his mind.

"They got away all right, did they?" The kaid, who had come noiselessly up behind them asked Sidi the question; and the latter swung round and saluted.

"Yes, your excellency. Six of the best men I have — to make sure."

Clarke beckoned Dick to follow him, and entered the tent.

"I thought it best," he said, as though taking the American into his confidence as an equal in command, "to have men sent out with instructions to the relief with the machine-guns to travel all night, if necessary. At least one of the dispatch-bearers will get through. If the guns get here in time, we are all right. From what I can learn, Buhammei, not believing that reinforcements are coming to us, is making a big mistake."

As if utterly exhausted, the general threw himself on his cot. Dick, divesting himself of the khaki coat that

he had worn under his Moorish garb, stretched himself on his own cot.

"What mistake is he making?" the American asked.

The kaid raised himself on his elbows, and looked across at the American as he explained:

"He is trusting to his having fully double the men we have, and is making his line too thin. We are massed very solidly, with the steep banks of the river on one side. He is throwing his men out on the plain side, covering about three-eighths of a circle."

"Going to pen us in eh?"

"Yes — more than that. He hopes to get action on the tribesmen themselves, who, he knows, will fight without discipline, and then expects, in the confusion, to chop the regulars to pieces."

"Strikes me as a good idea," Dick said, "unless the relief comes."

"Precisely. I am gambling everything on the relief coming in time, and am letting my men get all the rest they can. Buhammei's mistake is over-confidence. He is making his plans quite openly and daringly, and doubtless thinks that I, being a European, will open the battle again at about three o'clock in the morning. His men will get no rest. Mine will. He will not attack before day, and I shall make no move until he does attack."

The American had another amazing revelation of the Englishman's calmness. He waited several minutes for the voice to resume, and then, to his surprise, saw the confident little general had dropped his pipe on the sand, and, with his helmet over his eyes, was going to

sleep. Dick, too alert for sleep, slipped quietly out of the tent, and almost fell over Sidi-Suleyman, who, stretched on his back, was smoking a cigarette. A change had taken place in the camp, and everywhere in the immediate neighborhood, under the cover of darkness, the small, black tents had disappeared. As far as Dick could see in the dim light preceding the rise of the moon, there was nothing but horses, either standing or lying down, with their riders stretched on the sand beside them.

"The kaid?" Sidi-Suleyman whispered.

"Is going to sleep."

The Arab got to his feet, and leaned forward. He gestured with the hand holding the cigarette, toward the men and horses in the foreground.

"Everything clear out there. Best men in army, those. Ready to take horses in one minute. Go fast when go. Only thing kaid say when he give order, 'Whole army follow these men.' So, good fight, eh?"

Dick, slightly mystified as to the kaid's plans, decided that, in any event, Sidi-Suleyman's fighting-lust would probably be satisfied before another day had passed. After a few perfunctory remarks, he went back to his own cot, where he tumbled and tossed, and thought of the day's advance. With his knowledge of military maneuvers, he could readily understand that the kaid was basing all his hope of success on a knowledge of the Moorish character. For his own part, he felt inclined to doubt the wisdom of risking all on one desperate throw with fate.

He was not certain how long he had been asleep when he was suddenly aroused by a sharp jerk, which dragged him off his cot to the sandy floor.

"Quick!" the kaid exclaimed, exultantly. "Out on your horse — quick! It's our turn, now."

The American, stopping only to arm himself, and still bareheaded, ran out, to find his horse at the tent door, in the keeping of his orderly.

The first light of dawn was just reddening the eastern plain, and everywhere was the wild rush of haste. He spurred after the kaid, who, with one leap had gained his saddle, and now plunged forward, shouting Arabic commands as he went. Over all the plain, bugles were imperatively issuing orders. Sidi-Suleyman was gone, and the picked horsemen below were riding as fast as their mounts could carry them toward the north. From the distance, the booming sounds of guns suddenly broke forth into a clamor, and Dick realized that the whole army of the kaid was swirling inward in regular formation, as if the first selected body of riders had been the head of a comet, whose tail was swinging into motion behind it. He succeeded in gaining the kaid's side, and found that they were almost in the very lead of the body of picked troopers, who were riding solidly and silently after them.

"The Sultan's men got here before I expected," the kaid yelled. "They must have ridden all night. It's working out just the way I thought. We'll cut Buhammei in two, to make a juncture, get the machine-guns, and then —"

His words were lost in a sudden, wild shout, and Dick,

with saber in hand, found himself charging into the midst of white-clad figures, who had rushed out to meet them. He struck and parried and struck again, until his arm was tired with continued effort. The pressure of horses' bodies, the attack of fierce antagonists, the wild yells of the tribesmen, the constant calls to Allah, the sounds of artillery suddenly leaping into fierce explosion, were all blended in one mad frenzy of battle. Dick had thrust a man through, and was drawing back, when, in the same instant, he saw another man striking at himself. The blow that followed almost knocked him from the saddle, and he was blinded by a gush of hot blood from a wound across the top and side of his head. He dimly realized that the Berber who had struck the blow sagged earthward in a white heap, and that his own animal was leaping sidewise, to avoid stepping on the body, while he clutched the high Turkish pommel dizzily. In a moment, however, he felt his senses returning, and, still carried onward in the attack he saw that his defender in the encounter had been Sidi-Suleyman, to whom, for a second time, he owed his life. The Arab clung to him, still riding forward, until they were in the midst of their own men; then, thrusting a canteen of some native liquor into the American's hand, he yelled:

“Drink and bathe!”

Dick obeyed the injunction, and the smart of the fiery liquor poured over his wound brought him back to keen consciousness as sharply as if it had been ammonia. His sense of touch told him that he had sustained nothing more serious than a ragged cut through the scalp.

Holding his saber under his arm, and still keeping in the midst of the charging troopers, he twisted a handkerchief round his head. He was striving to gain the fighting outskirts of the troopers, when he heard loud, exultant cheers ahead. Before he guessed the meaning of the noise, he had gained a place where no foemen were about him. The shouts of jubilation were kept up, and at length he began to comprehend the cause.

Buhammei had made a great mistake. His thin line had been cut in two, and the kaid's army was joining the relief. A mass of white figures, shrieking in enthusiasm, rushed out to meet Clarke's forces, and as far as Dick could see, stretching back into the dawn, were the forces of the Sultan. The American gained the kaid's side, and gathered from the excited explanations of the officers round him that the Sultan himself, disregarding the kaid's request for but fifteen hundred men, had rushed forward treble that number, spurring them on to haste by his own example.

The fierce movement was continuous as troop after troop of the Sultan's army massed forward in confusion. Back in that battle-zone through which they had passed, the noise of conflict was dying away. With the old trick of the American cavalymen, Dick got to his feet on top of his saddle, and from this altitude looked back over the intervening heads. The Berbers had abandoned hope of stemming the tide, and were hurrying off across the plain, in an endeavor to concentrate their forces. Both armies were twisting and moving in an effort to regain order. The kaid was giving sharp

commands to those about him, and had assumed full control. The guns of both sides had ceased firing, and the American surmised that the batteries were taking new positions. Back in the ranks of the reinforcements, a balloonlike structure was suddenly uplifting itself, and from its gorgeous markings it was plain that this was the tent of the Sultan being raised.

Dick dropped down to his seat in the saddle before he was aware that Clarke was coming toward him.

"Lord!" exclaimed the Englishman. "Some of them got you, did they? Bad?"

"No. Sidi-Suleyman has me in his debt again."

The American was not aware that the red stains upon his face made him appear more desperately hurt than he was, so he failed to understand the look of relief that came over the kaid's face.

"Don't mind me," Dick said; and then: "What do you want me to do?"

The kaid looked at the American sharply, and spurred his horse up until they were side by side.

"I want you to be near the machine-guns. I'll be there myself when things get good and hot. The guns will be down near the Sultan's tent. His Majesty, being a fool, insists on the royal display, and gives those other fellows a target. You get down there by the battery, please. There won't be any more fighting until after the morning prayers."

The kaid wheeled his horse, and galloped away, with Sidi-Suleyman at his heels, while Dick leisurely rode toward the big tent. When some hundred yards distant from the canvas enclosure surrounding the tent,

his heart leaped at the sight of guns with which he was familiar — bright machine-guns, the very latest word in warlike invention, guns capable of firing at least five hundred shots per minute, and creating a solid zone of death through which nothing might pass alive. He dismounted, saluted the captain in charge, and spoke in Arabic:

“I am ordered by the kaid to report here,” he said, haltingly.

To Dick’s surprise, the man put out his hand, showing that he was familiar with Western greetings, and replied in English:

“Ah,” he said, “are you American, or English? I live in America four years. Go there World’s Fair. My name Almid. But, say, you bad hurt, eh? Me very good doctor. Work one year hospital. Janitor, eh? You understand — janitor. But, all time, Almid watch. Bime-by, he learn lot. Me fix.” Before Dick could protest, the Moor was taking off the stained handkerchief, had called for water, said something that Dick could not understand, and was deftly examining the wound. “Head not broke, I think,” he said. “Me wash off. Sew up, eh?”

To Dick’s further amazement, the man dragged out a hospital emergency-case, and, without asking consent, began clipping the hair from the edges of the wound, after which, still without permitting the American to have any voice in the matter, he stitched it up, and bound it over with plaster. In a similarly arbitrary manner, he jerked a red fez from the hand of the

nearest man, put Dick's wet handkerchief in the top of it, and dropped it down over the wounded head.

"Bime-by sun," he said. "Not much good for white man. Make headache!"

Dick was beginning to believe that the Moors were not so unkindly, after all, when assured of a foreigner's friendship. Left alone, he watched the hasty preparations for breakfast that were being made on every hand. As if by mutual armistice, both armies, now concentrated a full mile apart, were resting.

After the fierce fighting of the morning, the momentary peace seemed unreal. The prayers at sun-up were a mockery. Twice, Kaid Clarke rode by, nodding to the American as he passed, and each time disappeared within the walled tent. There was another wait, and the Englishman came again, this time dismounting to look over the battery.

"His Majesty," the kaid said to Dick, "has left the capital under the command of the minister of war, who is a competent man, as Moroccans go. The grand vizier is here with the Sultan. Immediately after prayers, His Majesty will show himself to the troops, according to ancient custom. They say it makes them fight harder."

Clarke mounted his horse, calling back as he did so:

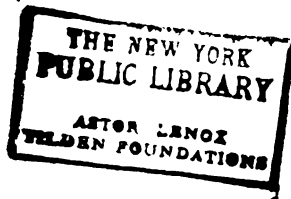
"Stick by the guns, old chap. That's where you can do me the most good;" and he rode away.

The Sultan at last appeared, in a hollow square that had been formed round the royal tent, composed in its inner lines of officers and sheiks. Dick, from a favored

position, was able to witness the ceremony at ease. A splendid horse, gorgeously saddled, was brought to an opening in the tent-wall, and a short, dark man, with a thin beard trained down to a point, stepped out to the animal. A shout of recognition went up, and from all sides of the square men saluted. The Sultan climbed into his saddle, and Dick saw that he was carrying a splendidly jeweled scimitar, and wearing high, tasseled boots, heavily embroidered with gold. The ruler rode completely round the square, while the royal band, made up of oboes and tom-toms, gave out a wailing, rhythmical tune, melancholy as a dirge, but with a certain barbaric stateliness. As the Sultan made his circuit, those present saluted three times, after which His Majesty, without from first to last having recognized anyone, again dismounted, and disappeared within the royal tent. As the flap was lifted open for the horse to be led through, Dick saw that several other horses were in the enclosure.

For another hour, there was stillness, then, as on the preceding day, the battle was abruptly opened by the terrific rush of the Berbers. This time, instead of advancing to the immediate attack, they made an immense sweep when distant more than three hundred yards, and immediately afterward the kaid himself came riding down his own lines, giving commands as he passed. A troop of men in green caftans hurriedly formed in front of the machine-guns, the captain of the battery gave curt orders, and, in the midst of the huge hollow square, yet leaving the mass of the royal army still centered round the Sultan's tent, they picked up the tripods, and





moved forward. On either flank, stretching far away, were their own supporting tribesmen and the heavier batteries. The machine-guns were nearly three hundred yards in front of the royal tent, when the whole army came to a halt. The shouts of the Berbers and their followers could be heard as they massed themselves for the attack upon the center, directly down upon the Sultan's pavilion.

A bugle called sharply, and Dick understood the maneuver when the whole mass of troops in front of them split in two, and, as if pivoted to the machine-guns, fell back to a line with them. Before, in unimpeded view, lay a strip of almost-naked yellow plain, where, rushing down toward them as if to carry everything with a sweep, the Berber horsemen charged, brandishing their arms and firing at will.

For an instant, the American shuddered, as he thought of the manner in which this reckless charge would be received. He pitied the ignorance of those men of the mountains, careening down within range of the machine-guns. The captain of the battery was standing as if tensed to leap forward, and his lips were drawn back in a savage, wolfish snarl. Behind him, in the well-known tones of the kaid, Dick heard a sharp command in Arabic.

"Now, fire!"

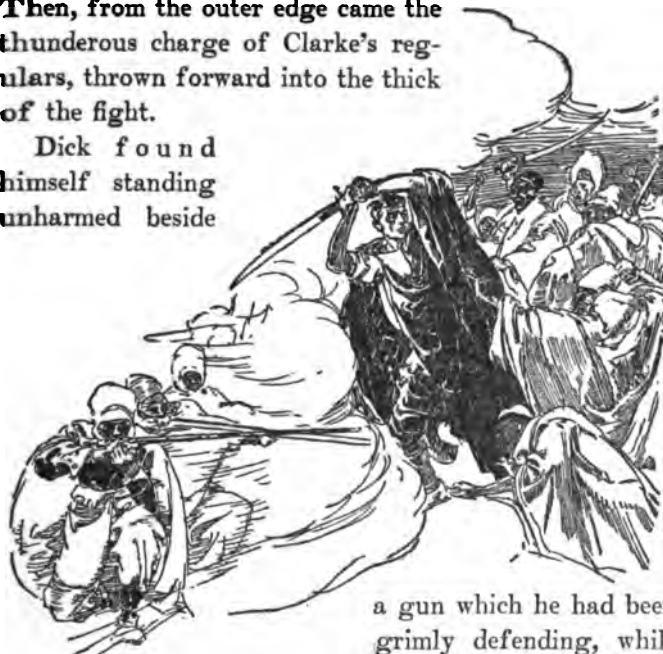
"Instantly, the whole battery leaped into action, like so many men bent on murdering everything within sight. Ammunition-carriers brought forward and heaped on the ground the long belts of cartridges, which were to feed the hoppers of the deadly little monsters. There

was a vicious, clattering crash that seemed continuously to swell in volume, and the fumes of the smokeless powder became acrid.

Out in front, the white line melted as if mowed down by the hand of the Prophet himself, and others, charging forward, piled themselves up on that horrible wall of dead and dying. Suddenly, the American saw that the two wings of their own army had been thrown forward, like a crescent, of which the horns were doubling out to embrace the enemy. The crash of heavier artillery had opened up behind, and shells went streaming overhead, to be answered by the return fire of Buhammei's army. A quick side movement was ordered for the machine-guns, and again they were facing the open plain, down which the Berbers once more charged, with valor undiminished, their whole being centered upon the capture of these new and strange weapons. This time, the hillmen forced themselves forward until again and again the guns had to be moved, to avoid those fanatics who had dropped almost before the wicked muzzles. Man after man of the battery had been killed. The captain had fallen almost at Dick's side, and one of the guns had been smashed by a shell. A fresh inrush was coming, and, for an instant, the battery stood in grave danger. Dick, regardless of consequences, had taken command, and was rallying those round him. As he ran behind one of the guns, he discovered that, sometime during the *melée*, Sidi-Suleyman had joined his force, and that the kaid was massing his choicest troops on either side, as if fearing that the guns would be endangered in this last, despairing attack.

It was a magnificent charge, and in savage persistence outdid all that had preceded. For one moment, the Berbers rode over their own dead and dying, gained the battery, and were killing the men who commanded it. Then, from the outer edge came the thunderous charge of Clarke's regulars, thrown forward into the thick of the fight.

Dick found himself standing unharmed beside



a gun which he had been grimly defending, while

round him lay dead and wounded men, and the battle was terminating in a rout. Buhammei's forces were scattering in a wild, almost hopeless, flight, fiercely pursued by the Sultan's troops. One gunner, dazed, started his gun into action again, shooting friend and foe alike before Dick could drag him away.

Over the whole stretch of plain, as far as eye could see, was a merciless display of barbaric war. Here and

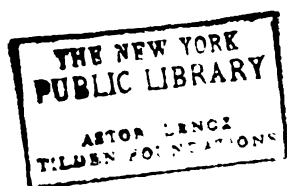
there, groups of the fugitives fought until surrounded. The sheepskins had come out, and were thrown upon the sand, their riders dismounting and standing upon them in the Mussulman avowal that there he would remain until death took him. Slashed, shot or thrust through, the Berbers died by hundreds. All discipline and organization seemed to have been lost. Everything was disintegrated. In this rush of victory, the troops that the kaid had so carefully drilled forgot all their training, and reverted to primitive, savage methods of warfare. Frenzied by blood and triumph, they were neither asking nor giving mercy, and behind them they left no living enemy. Only one division of the army stood fast, and, looking back toward the Sultan's tent, Dick discovered that it was still solidly surrounded by men wearing the royal uniform, and he could discern, sitting well in advance and apparently in command, a white-helmeted figure, which he recognized as the kaid.

A man galloped up, and said in Arabic:

"His Excellency, the kaid requested that you report to him at once."

Dick mounted the horse brought by the courier, and made haste to obey, approaching with a salute, to which the kaid responded. He was astonished when the general wheeled, and, beckoning him to follow, turned back, and passed through a way opened for them in the ranks of the troops. They rode squarely up to the entrance of the walled enclosure guarding His Majesty, and there were met by a man who, Dick later learned, was the grand vizier. Once within, where all





view of the outside was cut off, the Englishman turned squarely toward the American.

"Whitney," he said, "You've got to help me save this dynasty. I begged the Sultan to keep his camp out of rifle range. He has paid for his disregard of my plea: He is dead!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

DICK frowned into the kaid's face, surmising by its serious expression that the death of the Sultan portended more than he, with his limited knowledge of Moorish affairs, had comprehended. The Englishman read the question in his eyes.

"Now that the Sultan is dead," he said, "we must name the logical successor, Prince Abdullah al Hadiz."

Dick still looked blank.

"Well?" he queried, "won't he be named — no matter what we do?"

"Be named! Humph! With an active, aggressive man in a disaffected kindgom, in a crisis like this? No! Of course, he wouldn't be named. What we've got to do is to keep the news of the Sultan's death from every one. We've got to keep it quiet until we can reach Fez, and then, in a place where I am surrounded by soldiers who will back me up, declare the new Sultan."

He stepped closer to the American, so that he could speak still lower, and said:

"The only men I can depend on here are the guardsmen outside. Of all the army beyond, there are not a thousand men on whose support I can positively rely. Among them may be thousands who would rather see Buhammei on the blue throne than a mere stripling prince. I can take no chances — not even in Fez —

until surrounded by my own troops. After that, the dissatisfied would be slow to revolt. It must be done!"

Dick peered at the patriarchal face of the grand vizier, who had stationed himself at the door of the royal tent, and then back at the Englishman, who was staring absent-mindedly at the horses within the enclosure. The din of the battle was receding into the distance. Now and then, there were scattered volleys of rifle fire, sounding thin and faint, betraying tiny tragic collisions. The murmuring of the camp had changed from a fierce excitement to a dull monotone of exultation, broken now and then by the more subdued, but anguished, sounds of suffering men being carried into the open space outside the canvas wall, which had been utilized for hospital purposes.

"I shall leave you on guard at the tent," the kaid said, "knowing that no one can pass while you and the grand vizier are here. I must give orders."

The American walked to the door of the tent, as his friend turned hurriedly away, and, for a long time, stood more motionless and grim than the aged Moor at his side, who had squatted down on the sand, and in it was guiding a long, lean finger that drew tedious patterns, and then with a sweep erased them, as if divining the future of the empire, in his own behalf.

When he returned, the kaid beckoned to the grand vizier, with whom he held a whispered conversation, and then a man was summoned from among the Sultan's personal attendants who guarded the horses. There was another whispered interview, following which the man led forth one of the heaviest and slowest of the

Sultan's barbs, a white Arabian, which, like nearly all the others, was overfed. To Dick's astonishment, the horse was led into the Sultan's tent. Still patient, the American stood guard, wondering meanwhile what plan the kaid was about to execute.

More than an hour passed. The firing had entirely ceased, and the victorious horde was returning. Dick gathered from the sounds of the outer camp that rations had been issued, and that the tired troopers were preparing their meal. Clarke emerged from the tent, and paused beside Dick with a look of such anxiety and distress that he appeared anything rather than a successful general, who had just won a decisive and overwhelming victory.

"Old man," he said, laying his hand on Dick's arm, "I'm deucedly sorry to run you into a mess like this. Do you know that I am taking you into a game where the chances are at least a hundred to one against our winning—and also that, if we don't win, our lives aren't worth that?"

He snapped his thumb and finger, and looked up into the American's face. To his delight, the latter grinned boyishly, held out his hand, and said:

"Excuse me, but these are the only games worth playing. Don't you worry about me. Think more about yourself. All I ask is to be in on the play."

The kaid smiled with a frank look of gratitude, and, without a parting word, hurried to the outlet, and disappeared. Dick resumed his watch over the royal shelter, walking backward and forward as if doing sentry duty, and he was scarcely aware of the fact that

the grand vizier, having completed his sand-divination, had slipped from sight. He heard a whispered conversation inside the balloonlike structure, but was unable to conceive what was taking place. He prolonged his beat to the gate of the canvas wall, and looked out in time to see a considerable body of the Marakesh men, accompanied by a battery of artillery, swing off toward the distant hills amid cheers from those left behind. Plainly, the kaid was aggressively following up the main body of Berber insurgents, to prevent their concentrating for another effort.

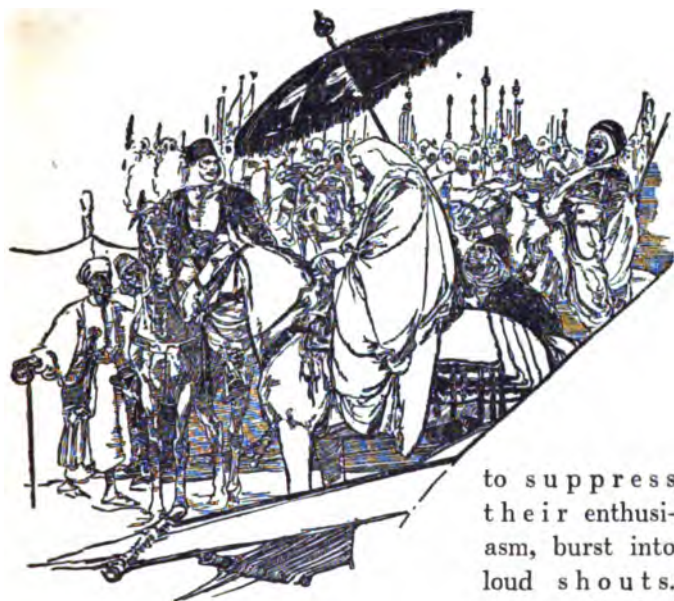
The American resumed his beat, until another series of shouts again took him to a point where he might see. A second body of men was heading away, and, almost immediately after, a third squadron swung abruptly off toward the broad ford, taking with them two of the machine-guns, strapped on the backs of mules, while an artillery wagon straggled behind. The camp was being rapidly reduced. The battlefield of the morning looked still and ghastly in the late afternoon sun. Men in the uniform of the Sultan's army were moving over the many acres strewn with victims. A wounded horse was lifting its head, and Dick saw one of the troopers, after glancing furtively round, put an end to the animal's misery, and hurry away. He did not appreciate this act of humanity until later, when he was to learn that it is against the Moslem creed to kill any dumb brute, and that history was only too full of battles wherein wounded animals were left to the mercy of God alone.

Dick returned to the immediate front of the tent,

where the subdued whispers continued, and there was another long wait, while the sun dropped into the west. He heard shouted commands outside, and knew that some new formation was being effected. Even the noise of movement ceased before the kaid reappeared. With him came four subordinate kaid, their shimmering silken garments showing the effects of the day's fierce campaign, and each was leading a horse. Dick's orderly also appeared with a mount, and, taking example from the others, the American stood in readiness. The tent-door was slipped back by two gorgeously clad slaves whom he surmised to have been personal attendants of His Majesty. He gave a gasp of something approaching horror when, led by a gigantic Moor, a white horse walked out, carrying none other than the Sultan. Beside him rode a man who hoisted a huge red umbrella. The grand vizier promptly lowered the hood, a slave ran beside, waving a silken scarf as if to keep the flies away, and the kaid sprang into their saddles.

Dick, obeying a hurried gesture from Clarke, did likewise, and spurred his horse into the group. As if the men at the wall-like enclosure had previously been stationed at the guy ropes, it fell in one fluttering mass to the ground.

The royal band shrilled out a weird march, suggesting some exultant song of the desert, and the procession moved forward. The troops had been massed into an immense hollow square, leaving open, like a broad channel, the road to Fez. All had been at attention. Now, they came to the regulation salute, and, unable



to suppress
their enthusi-
asm, burst into
loud shouts.

S t r a i g h t

through this channel, the Sultan passed, his garments swaying rhythmically with the stride of his horse. For what seemed to Dick an interminable age, they passed down this lane of living men, who saluted the rigid figure of what but a few hours before had been the Commander of the Faithful and the Sword of the Prophet. His own horse was abreast the kaid's mount, and it now and then pranced restlessly to one side. The umbrella-bearer, the slave whirling the white scarf and the four veteran Moors, riding close beside the dead Sultan, seemed all part of a dream; the grand vizier, bent and staring at his saddle-pommel, unreal. Dick glanced across at Kaid Clarke, who rode with eyes

roving restlessly from side to side, as if seeking to surprise some of knowledge in those who lifted sabers as they passed. It was hard for the American to appreciate, in this moment of tensity, that the sinewy little Englishman, riding so lightly in the rear of the terrible cortège, was for the moment master of the empire, and, with inconceivable daring, was molding circumstances to his will. He heard the pounding of hoofs behind him, and whirled in his saddle, as though fearful that the trickery of their sad exit had been fathomed. For one agonized instant, he was apprehensive lest the Sultan's army were boiling in round them in a living, insurgent stream.

"S-s-s-s-t!"

He was recalled to himself by the kaid, who was still riding calmly, and holding firm gauntleted fingers on his bridle reins. Dick, too, resumed his straight seat in the saddle, but not before he had discerned that those following were the remnant of the fateful squadron, the kaid's bodyguard, headed by a man who grinned from scarred lips. Sidi-Suleyman himself was at their heels.

The man with the big silken umbrella lowered it, and swung out to the roadside. The scarf-bearer carefully folded his long, white silken shred, and dropped behind to a led horse. The four Moors drew closer to the Sultan's mount, and the road lay open. The last outskirts of the camp had been passed, and all danger from that source was over.

They traveled sedately to a bend of the road, swung round it in a wide curve, and were at last concealed from

the camp by low-lying hills. The kaid leaned over, and spoke:

"There is not a man here who doesn't know what we are doing. It was a horrible alternative, but the only thing to do. Horse in the tent. *Rigor mortis*. Broken spears lashed to his saddle, to hold him in position. Feet securely tied underneath. Hands tied to pommel."

The kaid halted the cavalcade, and gave sharp orders in Arabic. The four Moors fell aside, and, motioning to Dick, he rode abreast the horse carrying the gruesome emblem of authority. Dick closed up on the opposite side of the white steed, and saw that the kaid had caught the unmanaged reins from beneath the listless hands.

"Come on," the kaid said; "keep close beside him. From this on, we must hurry as best we can."

They spurred their horses forward in grim silence. Now and then, one of the kaid's would gallop solicitously abreast, and relieve one or the other of the foreigners from their hard task. They paused but once, and this when the sun dropped from sight; but the prayers were brief.

With almost reckless abandon, they plunged over the starlit road, and throughout the entire journey met no one. Dogs barked when they skirted some half-deserted village, and once two riderless horses, saddled and bridled, dashed madly away from them. Lights, glittering like low, faint stars on the far edge of the world, began to take steady shapes, and they knew that, after the long hours of travel, they were approach-

ing Fez, within whose walls would come the close of this tragic drama. White and ghostlike, the minarets became outlined, thrusting themselves upward into the warm and passionless night. The great walls of the capital, with their watch-towers, loomed before them. The marketmen, the farmers and the produce-vendors, who, in times of peace, camped without, that they might more early invade the *sok* or market-place, were not there. War, with its dread of robbery and death had laid a chill hand on the activities of the land. A brooding horror of what might come and a terrible suspense had changed the habits of the countryside. There was no bark of dog, or lowing of disturbed kine, waiting fearfully for the morrow, to challenge them as they advanced to the gray old gates, above which waiting soldiers clustered menacingly, ready for the challenge.

Directly beneath the entrance to the frowning arch, they came to a halt. In the very foreground, the white horse, lathering and weary, lifted its head to look at the lights. The grand vizier, seeming under the dim starlight infinitely more old and bent, rode forward, and in a thin, tremulous voice hailed the watchman. In this time of fear, his tone of authority was gone, and he had become merely an aged supplicant, begging for admission to an asylum of refuge. The *kaid's* horse, answering the prick of a spur, crowded close to the royal steed, and the little Englishman reached far across.

"Here, Whitney," he said, "take the reins."

Dick leaned out, and caught them in his hand.

"We've got to outrage tradition," the kaid said rapidly, "because these fellows behind haven't got the nerve. It's against the faith, you know, for a dead man to enter the city gates."

He struck his horse so savagely that the animal bounded forward to the very foot of the gates.

"Open!" he commanded. "In the name of the Prophet! Open quickly! It is I, Kaid Clarke, who tells you to do so! His Majesty, the Sultan, is with us, and will not be delayed! He wishes to rest after his great victory. His enemies have been scattered to the winds. Open, I say! Open!"

An excited murmur burst from the watch-tower and ramparts, and the gates swung back. The cavalcade started forward, met by the gleam of swiftly lighted torches to conduct His Majesty, the Sultan, on his last ride. The grand vizier, regaining some of his courage, dashed ahead, shouting:

"Balak! Balak! Harabba! Harabba!"—"Make way! Make way for the Sultan's own soldiers!"

And, instantly, from both sides, the soldiers called:

"God prolong the life of our illustrious lord and master."

Dick felt that even the kaid's troopers in the rear had, for an instant, wavered at this breach of the faith in bringing a dead man through the gates. But, once inside and willing to attribute the sacrilege to the two foreigners, they regained their composure, and were ready to present a brave show of triumph. They had barely passed through the lane overhung by the inner battlements, and emerged into the broader street

leading toward the heart of the old city, before the crowd began to augment. It came mysteriously from the swung doors of walls and the unbarred portals of many gates. Its constant cry was:

"The Defender of the Faith has scattered his enemies. The Berber is no more."

The torches increased in number until the narrow highways were ablaze with light. The guns on the outer walls were booming out the royal salute. From the terraces overhead, as they progressed, the swathed heads of women leaned far out, and dark arms and hands showered the conquerors with a rain of flowers.

Dick had hastily tied the Sultan's bridle-reins to the high saddle-pommel beneath the lashed hands, and pulled the royal robe forward to conceal the subterfuge. The whole pageant was a grim and terrible travesty. In the formation adopted on the instant when they entered the street, there rode ahead a quartette of troopers, who strenuously cleared the way. Behind them came the vizier, now riding erect, and immediately following him came other men, who carried proudly aloft the imperial banners, which waved and gleamed in heavy silken folds as they advanced. There followed another open space, in the midst of which, closely surrounded by torchbearers, and flanked by the two officers, rode the Sword of the Faithful, stiffly erect, and staring straight ahead.

With wide, unseeing eyes, came this tragic conqueror, conquered by death! The light of the torches, flaring up and illuminating his mask-like face, showed nothing other than the well-known lineaments of this supreme head of the nation. No sign of victory was

there in that cold, immobile face, no light of exultation in the staring eyes. Dead and cold, he rode with a semblance of pride in the midst of his followers. The chin was held high, and the flowing end of his *jelaba* fluttered backward in the soft breeze of the night. His horse, the great white Arabian, himself descendant of a proud line, arched his neck, and trod lightly in this last pageant of Muley-Mohammed.

Determined and soldierly, the kaid and his companion, that captain of an army across a wide-flung sea, rode stirrup to stirrup with the Sultan, and looked straight ahead with frowning eyes, in the last desperate lap of this race for a throne. They debouched into a square, where a white surge of humanity, twisting and writhing like the breakers of a storm-tossed ocean, surged about them, and then, surrounded by a maelstrom of light and movement, turned toward the imperial palace, while behind eddied the shouting stream, seeming ever to follow steadily after, as if bent on engulfing them.

The palace gates swung wide. Security was before them. The harbor had been reached. Inside the huge square, Kaid Clarke's own troops, forewarned by the royal salute bellowed from the battlements into the still night, had massed themselves solidly for the Sultan's reception. The outer gates clashed shut, barring that exultant multitude which had acclaimed the home-coming of the victor. Straight across the open space, they passed, and through the gate leading into the inner spaces of the palace. The escort came to a halt outside, and stood at attention. Sidi-Suleyman had hastily detached himself in obedience to the kaid's orders previ-

ously issued, and, in a few moments, the most trusted officers had hurried inside.

At the entrance to the palace itself, the mask had been dropped. The pitiful, proud figure, still rigid in its death-frozen posture, was lifted from the horse to which it had been lashed for its terrible triumphal ride. The grand vizier himself reached over, and, with a reverent hand, as if seeking atonement for the irreverence that had gone before, lifted the silken *jelaba*, and wound it round and round the cold face and staring eyes.

A hushed and terrified group of ministers put their arms beneath the corpse, and carried it tenderly away into the halls of state, where, when nature's relaxation came, it might be composed, and laid with its head toward the rising sun, to keep company with the faithful of that ancient dynasty who had gone before.

With the four Moorish kaid, who had been his companions on that grim ride from the battlefield, the American stepped to one side, and waited for what he knew not. The English adventurer had disappeared with the body of the man whom, in life and death, he had so loyally served.

From the dark arches of the imperial palace, the kaid emerged presently, leading by the hand a little boy, who stared quickly round him like a frightened bird at everything in sight. It was the prince. A huge black, clad in the gorgeous garments of a house-servant, ran hurriedly out, and lifted the broad umbrella of state, as if certain that, even there in the night, the emblem of authority must be raised. The tired white horse,

which had stood with drooping head just outside the inner gate, was led within. The grand vizier, still in his stained robes of travel, and followed by the ministers and kaids, stalked majestically out to the center of the square, and raised his hand. The mystified soldiers were still standing at salute.

A breathless hush invaded the palace square, a hush so deep that the sounds from the city without, although far off and subdued, came with shrill and insistent distinctness. The very tinkle of guitars, strummed on some outlying terrace, were wafted to them from over the bordering walls, which in all their history had witnessed no more tragic and unexpected scene than this.

Standing alone, and turning from side to side, the tall figure of the aged vizier appeared endowed with a majesty of its own.

"The Sultan is dead," he called; and then, swinging his arm in an indicative gesture, he whirled back till he faced the open inner gate. Both arms were now lifted high and wide. "Long live the Sultan!"

Through the dim portal, there came alone and unattended to the center of the square, the stained and dust-coated white horse, directed by the nervous boyish hands. The empty stirrups, too long for his reach, and so lately vacated by his dead father's feet, swung from side to side, and he appeared a miniature in the depths of the high red-and-gold-embroidered saddle that had held his sire. There was one wavering, agitated instant, in which the picked soldiers of the guard, grim, determined veterans, looked at one another in astonishment. Then, resuming the habit and discipline of

heredity, they came sharply to the royal salute, and, in time-honored enthusiasm, shouted:

"Long live the Sultan!"

Kaid Clarke, who had been standing in the group of officers, took three or four quick energetic steps to Dick's side, and seized his friend's hand in a hard clutch.

"We've won," he said. "Do you know what that means? We've won! We've saved Morocco! Morocco is safe!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

ASQUAD of the Sultan's bodyguard forced its way through the crowded streets with difficulty. Already, the excitement of the night had been doubled by the announcement that, by the hand of Allah, Muley-Mohammed had been suddenly removed from his throne, in the very climax of his glory, and that Prince Abdullah al Hadiz, long designated the heir, had taken his place. In the midst of the escort, as a dignitary of note, rode Captain Richard Whitney, bearing the news to the American consulate.

In all the immediate vicinity of the palace, the queen city of Megrab was densely crowded, and progress was slow. With the incredible swiftness of news conveyed by mouth and ear, it had become noised about that a Nazarene, a foreign kaid of great prowess, had assisted that other and more familiar kaid to victory, and that his eyes had been opened to the true faith in the midst of battle. Hence, the attitude of the mob was, when it took time to stare at the horsemen, more than friendly. The captain of the escort turned away from the main streets, and plunged off into the maze of vaulted archways and high, bare walls, where the men must ride in single file.

With endurance of mind and body strained to the breaking point, it seemed to the American that years

had elapsed since he had bidden good-bye to the Honorable Bob at the door of the consulate. The oil-lamps, flickering in the iron wall-brackets of the short passages, and the ring of the cobblestones beneath his horse's feet, suggested a vast and modern civilization after that age spent in the wild mountains among wilder inhabitants, and after those living, fateful hours on sandy plains. The whole expedition, with its desperate struggle and tragic finale, was as a nightmare, prolonged and distressing, through which he had passed. In the relaxation of the hour, when safety was assured, and all plans to which he had been partner were consummated, he felt singularly stupid and dazed. And it was in this mood that he came to the consulate.

Sentries were guarding its doors, but these made way for the captain of the escort, who clattered loudly on the heavy bronze knocker, and, when the door opened, saluted and passed the American inside. The stately Arab porter was no longer there. Instead, another soldier asked his business, and then led him across the outer court to the inner door, where he was greeted by a strange Arab who led him to the old familiar *salon*. Almost at the threshold, a sense of overwhelming embarrassment came over him. He had forgotten that he was no longer one of the family, save by association.

He doffed his helmet, and stood in the outer circle of light, marked by wounds, begrimed by powder-smoke, and covered with dust, hollow-eyed from sleepless nights, his face perceptibly aged by long, trying days.

The consul was the first to recognize Dick, and leaped forward to clutch the young man in his arms.

"My God, Dick!" he exclaimed. "Dick, what have they done to you?"

The officer felt his knees giving way, and, for an instant, everything in the *salon* — Charlotte, who was coming toward him with outstretched hands, Margaret Clarke, who had arisen to her feet with fingers tightly interlocked across her breast, the lights, the furniture — everything swam dizzily in a great, swooning circle. The consul's voice came as if from another world:

"Lord, he's about to faint! Get some brandy, some of you, quick! There it is on the sideboard! Get some, can't you!"

When the faintness had passed, and his senses were quite clear again, Dick found himself leaning back in the depths of the Honorable Bob's easy chair, with Charlotte solicitously hovering over him, and the Honorable Bob himself trying to force brandy down his throat. On the other side knelt Margaret, with a strange light in her eyes, a light that sent his pulses bounding at a more rapid rate than did the brandy he gulped. Surprised, she flushed, arose quickly to her feet, and almost instantly was again the woman veiled, the woman he had known and learned to love in those distant months, away back there before he went out on the desperate campaign which had lasted so many ages.

"Give me food," he said. "I haven't eaten for thirty hours, and I've fought for so long that I can't seem to remember it all now, and we've made a new king, and —" He caught the expression of strained anxiety on the English girl's face. "Ah, I forgot! Your brother is unharmed. He was the one who did

it. I don't seem to understand it all; but he says he saved the throne. We whipped all the men that Buhammei could bring!"

"Buhammei!" They were all staring at him now, and for the first time he realized that the name of the pretender was unknown to them. He started to explain, but the Honorable Bob put a big hand across his mouth, and burst out:

"That's enough of this! Can't you girls see that Dick is about all in? Give him a minute's rest, can't you? Here, Dick, you come with me, and get into a cold bath, while these girls get the best there is to eat. Somebody hit you a clout over the head, didn't they? Never mind tellin' me now. Come on!"

He put his arm round Dick, as if this were still the boy of the range, and so led the weakened soldier across the court and past the fountain to the big bathroom, where he insisted on helping with the undressing, and turned the water on. The consul was standing outside the door when Dick, refreshed, and in the clean and accustomed clothing of civilization, brought him by a servant, emerged. His supper was waiting, and, ministered unto by Charlotte and Margaret, he sat down to the meal. Then, with rapidly returning strength, he told, as he ate, of his experiences.

"It's my opinion," he said, as at last he arose from the table, and lighted a cigar, "that the good old kaid won't be here with us much before tomorrow evening. Heavens! That man is made of steel. How he can keep it up for another twelve hours is beyond me, and I'm pretty tough. I tell you," he closed enthusiastic-

ally, "he is the best little man I have ever known."

He caught a gleam of proud happiness in the eyes of the kaïd's sister, who, like the others, had been listening spellbound to his words.

"So, it was Buhammei — oh! — our Mr. Buhammei!" the consul said, thoughtfully. "He kicked up all this row! Do you know, I might have suspected as much? The very day you fellows left, about half the Arabs working round these diggin's, includin' that doorman that I can now see was nothin' more than a spy, disappeared, and took to the tall grass. We ain't heard nothin' from them since. It's all easy enough to see, now. They tore out to be with their boss. The only wonder to me is that they didn't try to cut a few throats before they started."

Dick did not answer. He had leaned back in such an attitude of weariness that Margaret took note of it, and she made the suggestion that the proper place for him was in bed.

"We can talk tomorrow," she said, "and, in the meantime, unless I am much mistaken, this man needs rest."

"That's right," the Honorable Bob assented, slapping his leg emphatically. "You go on up to bed, Dick. That's where we're all goin'."

And Dick, smiling at the gentle tyranny surrounding him, obeyed.

He had already donned his pajamas, when, on a sudden, he decided to shave himself before retiring. Slipping on his dressing-gown, he had the task half-completed, when he heard slippers feet passing along the

gallery. He turned to see the Honorable Bob, candle in hand, standing in the doorway.

"I was kind of worried about somethin', my boy," he said, entering and seating himself on the foot of Dick's bed. "Now, you just go on and finish shavin', while I talk. I believe I can talk better if you ain't lookin' at me. It's — it's about that letter."

To avoid his own as well as his foster father's embarrassment, Dick finished his shaving with unusual care, while the consul continued:

"I never did anything in my life that hurt as much, Dick, but I had to do it. You know how I've been father and mother to Charlie, and, if I do say it myself, sometimes to you. The trouble with me was that I was a man livin' in a dream. I had my own way. I was too successful in everything I undertook. A successful man has to always keep a curb bit on himself. If he doesn't, it's all-fired easy for him to get to thinkin' that the Lord made just two things — him and the others. You two were the others, and, without realizing it, I was trying to bend your hearts to an old man's will."

There was a heart-breaking pathos in the speaker's voice, betraying the great relinquishment he had made when all his dreams were toppled over like castles of smoke blown away by the wind. Dick felt a lump of sympathy swell in his throat, and choke him till the moisture came to his eyes. To fight for time for the curbing of his emotions, he washed his face noisily in the little basin, applied the towel vigorously, and then, at last, turned round.

Charlotte, clad in her wrapper and with her long hair

hanging in a heavy braid, rendering her girlish again, stood in the doorway, with anxious eyes and parted lips.

"I — I heard you talking," she said, scarcely above a whisper; "and I couldn't help eavesdropping. I came in because —" And then, as Dick held out his arms to her, she rushed into them, clasping her own round his desert-tanned neck. "Oh, Dick, dear, dear, old Dick! You do understand, don't you?"

The officer held her in his arms, and had a sense of clumsiness as he soothed her and held her close. He caught the tearful uplifted face between his hands, and looked deep into the candid eyes. The Honorable Bob, who had leaned over with both elbows on his knees, his fingers clutched through his hair, and his eyes staring blindly at the floor, was forgotten.

"Charlie," said Dick, "Charlie girl, it is I who have been in the wrong. It was I who should have spared you this, but — forgive me — I was blind. I thought you were different from me! I should have known better! Listen!" He bent his head forward, until his lips were close against her cheek, as if imparting a secret in the manner of those childhood days before they, too, read life aright. "Listen!" he whispered. "Not until I came here did I know that you were my sister in everything but blood, and that such you should always be, unless we made a great mistake. It would have been a mistake! It would have been a pity!"

She pulled away from him, and, as if he even yet feared lest he had humiliated her, his hands dropped to his sides. The Honorable Bob still looked dejectedly at the floor. For a moment, the girl stared at Dick, and

her face portrayed the wondering question of her mind. Suddenly, she sprang to him again, threw her arms round his neck, and pulled his head low.

"Is it Margaret?" she whispered. "I am so glad — so glad!"

She had withdrawn from him, still holding his head pinioned in her arms, and spoke the last words aloud. Blushing with an uncontrollable confusion, he stood looking at her, his eyes admitting the truth.

Then, knowing how all the silent old man's fondest hopes had been wrecked, the two stood embarrassed, until at last Charlotte turned and went to him.

"I am glad," she explained, boldly. "I have learned that Dick loves me as I do him, that I shall always be his sister, even as he shall always be my brother."

The Honorable Bob arose, towering above them, and glared for a long time from beneath his gray eyebrows, questioning one and then the other. Suddenly, as if amused at the whole situation, he dropped back on the edge of the bed, slapped his knee with a resounding smack, and lifted his head in a great, resounding laugh.

"So, that's the way of it," he said. "I'm the one that's been the idiot. . . . Sit down here beside me, both of you." He put his arms round them, as though they were still but boy and girl, and went on: "I'm gettin' old, and you two, who are all I've got, mustn't be too hard on me for my blunders. All of us make 'em. The longer I live, the more I'm learnin' this lesson. We've got to have a heap of patience with stupidity, because we can't be quite sure how long we'd stay on earth ourselves, if the Lord hadn't made so

many closed seasons for fools. We aren't goin' to talk any more about this. It's all over and done with. We're goin' to bed. But, before we go, I want to say this, Dick: that, while Charlie and me let you out of the marryin' proposition, we don't let you out of the family. For more than ten years, my will has declared that you're my boy, and that, when I'm gone, you're to have half of everything that was old Bob Marshall's, and, by Jehosaphat, I'm not goin' to change it!"

The three were closer together in that one instant than they had been for years. All falsity of position, all misconception of thought, all mistakes of affection, were swept aside, and they were a family again.

They left the soldier to his rest; but he, weariness and wounds forgotten, for some time lay staring out at the dim light through the latticed columns of the gallery.

The turbulent cries of the capital city, where a boyish Sultan had assumed the throne, were mellowed by space and intervening walls. The night birds in the Garden of Fate behind the house, calling to one another in soft alarm, lent a tremulous music to his thought.

The little kaid, of the worn, tired face, holding a kingdom together, was forgotten. All that Dick knew was a strange and joyous peace, as of one who, after honorably struggling through every vicissitude, has found at last the open way.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THROUGH all the morning hours, the wide-flung gates of Fez were opened. The narrow streets and towering walls of the gray old city resounded to the clatter of hoof on stone and the rumble of gun returning home. The war was over! Brief, desperate and fateful as it had been, it had culminated in one irrevocable decision, and the hope of the Berber was gone. Dust-smirched couriers swept importantly through, with the unending and invariable report that the men of the mountains had paid the price of ambition in streams of blood. Hacked and harried, driven from cover to cover and from hill to hill, they had succumbed to that attribute of progress — organization. No more would the gauntlet of war be thrown in ancient way, no more would serried legions of tribesmen charge shrieking down on modern guns. Living placidly in the fastnesses of the Atlas chain, the valiant mountaineers had not realized that, in that world from which they held aloof, different methods of war and conquest had developed, rendering puny any effort they might make. Shereef and sheik alike had been taught the lesson: that the narrow blue of the Mediterranean, dividing them from the detested unbeliever, had also divided them from the great march of civilization. True, it was a civilization with deadly machine-guns to enforce

its demands; nevertheless, a civilization of invention. They had met another Omdurman, as those desert men of like faith had met Kitchener's terrible guns in a last futile struggle for independence.

With underlying volatility of temperament, despite its years, the old city of Fez, rival of splendidly fabled Bagdad, burst into the colors of gayety. The old Sultan was dead. Long live the new! Banners streamed from terrace walls. The squares blossomed in masses of silken color, gold-embroidered splendors were stretched in open gates, and from the mosques was lifted upward a drone of unceasing prayer. In a profiligacy of confusion, the queen city would celebrate the end of a revolt, the death of one Sultan and the accession of a new.

Almost at dawn, the foreign minister presented his compliments to the American consul, and rendered official notice that Abdullah al Hadiz now ruled. Thoughtless of the Sultan who was gone, and engrossed in the holiday forthcoming, the people swarmed through the streets of Fez, chattering gayly. To them, it was an important event. To that great world outside, it was merely a two-line dispatch: "An uprising has been quelled. Muley-Mohammed is dead, and Abdullah al Hadiz has been placed upon the throne."

When Dick awoke, and, as if expecting to see a camp round him, sat up on his bed, and looked bewilderedly for the walls of a tent, it was almost noon. From the courtyard below, he heard an excited, laughing voice.

"Well, what do you think of that, father? Here's a note from Hamilton, addressed to all of us, Dick in-

cluded, which says he's too busy to come before evening. Too busy!"

"Hamilton!" Dick smiled thoughtfully to himself, crawled stiffly to the floor, looked at his patched head in the mirror, and, trailing his bathrobe, headed for the shower. The very free use of the name seemed to augur the most satisfactory conclusion for all that had distressed him. The consummation of his foster sister's happiness, with the happiness of the man he so intensely admired, now seemed inevitable. Knowing that it would not be long delayed with so bold an adventurer as the kaid, Dick had no further doubts.

They were in the Garden of Fate, and it was evening, before Kaid Clarke, confident that the new government was firmly installed, came to them. He entered the garden unannounced, and, being still clad in a Moorish general's uniform, his heelless boots made no sound as he approached them, unobserved.

"Hello," he said. "Everything all right?"

He addressed them as nonchalantly as though he had parted from them within the hour, and had undergone no vicissitudes in the meantime. The Honorable Bob started toward him with a far greater display of emotion than was shown by his sister, for whom the consul at once made way. She put her hands on his shoulders, and studied his face lovingly for a moment, then slowly kissed him, and, with a sigh of relief, turned away.

It seemed to Dick, who was watching her, that she was holding herself in check, for, as she passed a ribbon of light to resume her seat, he saw that her lips were trembling, and that her eyes were moist. Had he not read in

those signs a happiness almost beyond bounds, he might have shown less restraint than she, and have answered the impulse of his heart to rush over and seize her in his arms. Intent on watching her, he lost much of the Honorable Bob's enthusiastic commendation, until aroused by the kaid's reply.

"Pshaw! I don't deserve all the credit. In fact, I know that without the old chap over there I couldn't have succeeded. I mean it, old man," he said, addressing Dick directly.

Hamilton Clarke faced Charlotte, and, for the first time since they had known each other, there was an almost insurmountable barrier of embarrassment between them. Very slowly, he walked toward her, holding out both hands. Before she could surmise his intention, he had finished the gap between them with one quick leap, and, regardless of everyone, caught her in his arms, and was clutching her against his breast. For one startled second, she tried to hold him away; then, with a courage equal to his own, she slipped both arms up round his shoulder and throat, and, half-sobbing, nestled her cheek closely against the folds of his *jelaba*.

"Well, I'll be damned!" a roar from the Honorable Bob, who had jumped to his feet, interrupted the tableau. "So, you're the feller, eh? It's you that broke my family up. What's more," he said, addressing Dick, "I'd like to know by what right you showed him my letter. You sure did it. That's the part of this affair that I don't like."

He stood quite still, waiting for an explanation. Dick arose from his chair, walked over, and put a hand

on the consul's shoulder, and studied the face opposite his.

"Dad," he said earnestly, "it wasn't according to the code. Perhaps, I had no business to show your letter; but I knew the truth — knew in a flash, that I had been as you have been — stupid. And I did as you will do — broke as you will break — any code, to give our Charlie happiness. Am I right?"

For a long time, the Honorable Bob stood unrelenting, and then, as if in surrender, he dropped back into his chair.

"Right! Of course, you're right. Only, you see, I'm just what you said — stupid. And I'll go further, and say that I'm rapidly coming to the conclusion that, in my old age, I'm tryin' hard to win the championship medal for fools."

Charlotte dropped to her knees beside his chair, and the kaïd started as if to speak, but the consul held up a hand.

"No, Hamilton, not now!" he objected. "I like you all right; but, somehow or another, I never had thought of you in that way. I've always been against folks of different countries marryin' each other, and I'm goin' to hand it to you straight, that, much as I think of you, I don't like it. No, hold on — hold on there, little girl. Don't start to draw away from me. And you needn't stiffen up like a poker, either, Hamilton, because I haven't said 'no.' All I want to say is, that you've got to give me time to get my bearin's. I'm kind of knocked out. I wish you'd all go away from me a while. Go anywhere. Go out in the garden, and

walk — anything, just so's to leave me alone for a while, till I can think it over. It ain't as if 'twas me alone that had to be satisfied. I've told you all that I play the game of life so that, when it's all over, I can meet the only woman I've ever worshiped, and have her tell me that I've done well. Somehow, I feel as if, if I sat here alone, and everything was quiet, I could talk to her about it, and know what she'd like to have me do."

They were too much impressed to hesitate, so, without further words, they obeyed his desire. Dick, walking silently beside the kaid's sister, paused and looked back. Bob Marshall, sagged wearily into the depths of his chair, appeared to have grown unaccountably old. The young officer almost gave way to an inclination to return, and to put his arm round the rough old foster father, who appeared so deserted and alone. Quite reluctantly, he decided it were best to do as the consul had wished. He therefore took his place at Margaret Clarke's side, and together, speechless and grave, they walked to the far end of the garden. Seated on one of the marble benches at the turn of the broad pathway, they came upon the kaid and Charlotte, talking earnestly. Not wishing to disturb the lovers, they took another course, which led them to the pergola where so recently they had parted. They hesitated, stopped, and finally seated themselves.

"I wonder," she said thoughtfully, "if many such affections exist?"

He knew that she was thinking of the faithfulness of the Honorable Bob.

"Yes," he replied, thoughtfully, "I believe there are many."

"But is it worth while to cultivate them, thus taking the terrible risk of a bereavement such as to leave perpetual longing for one who is dead?"

"I fail to see how you can ask that." Dick's disappointed face bent toward her, showing plainly in the light from the bracketed lamps of the surrounding lawn. "If one loves as they must have, it would be better to live a day and die than not to have known life's possibilities."

Startled by his earnestness, the girl fixed her dark eyes on his face, and intently studied it. She seemed to discern something there that made her turn away, and look into the dim shadows of the glade beyond the lawn, as if seeking some solution to her question from their depths.

"If one could only be certain," she said. "Yet, how is it possible? Charlotte and you have known each other from childhood, but —"

"Neither had the courage to tell the truth! That of ours was a different love."

"Ah," she said softly, "what a mistake was avoided! It would have been a mistake! I am so glad for her sake, and for Hamilton's happiness!"

"And — will you not go further, and add — for mine?"

He bent more eagerly toward her; but she did not look up, nor attempt reply.

"Can you not say that, also?" he insisted. "Is my happiness nothing to you?"

"Yes," she admitted, "it is." Her voice was so low that it was barely audible.

He leaned still further toward her, gently, as if fearing to alarm her by vehemence of action.

"Have you not known for months — or at least since that night we two were here together, on this same seat — that I wanted to be a part of your happiness?"

She tried to stop him, but faltered; and he, insistent that she should know and give him answer, hurried on:

"You have known it! You have read it in my eyes. You did know it on that night when I bade you good-bye, expecting never to be alone with you again. You endorsed my struggle when we parted, and then — then, at least — you loved me!"

Nervously, she lifted herself lightly to her feet, endeavoring to gain her habitual repression, which was being swept away by his earnestness.

"Margaret," he pleaded, "Margaret, is it not true?"

She stepped away from him, and out to one of the white columns; and he, eager to hear her speak, arose and followed. He saw that the fingers of one hand had tightly gripped the fluting of the stone, and would have placed his own hand over hers, had she not pulled hers away.

"No — no!" she forbade, retreating from him, and holding both hands extended. "Please, please, I implore you to — to —"

He halted abruptly, with a chill of apprehension. His arms, which had been extended as if begging her to come to their shelter, dropped heavily to his sides.

His attitude was that of the man who is sensing a first feeling of bitter defeat.

"Ah," she reproached, "the captain whom I have so admired proves reckless in conclusions. I am sorry."

She stepped closer to him, and looked into his troubled face; then, with new resolve, she motioned toward the seat.

"Come, friend," she invited, "and let us sit down here for a moment longer. It is difficult for me to say what I want to. Won't you listen to me? Won't you do this much?"

She seated herself, but for several moments he stood despondently, and then, hopeless, did as she requested.

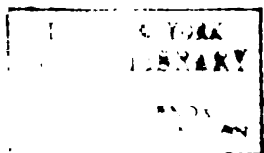
"Will you believe me strange," she began, abruptly turning toward him, "if I tell you that you are the only man I have ever loved? No — no — not that! Let me finish, please. And yet, in the turmoil of these past few weeks, I have never been able to decide that I loved you enough to become a part of your life — to be —" she whispered the last words — "your wife!"

His heart was throbbing now, and only by clutching his hand on the edge of the seat could he restrain himself, knowing that impetuosity might rob him of any chance he had.

"Well? Go on — won't you?"

"And the wildest mental battle I have ever fought has been since I learned the truth regarding yours and Charlotte's betrothal, and that it had been ended. You wanted to know if I knew that you loved me. Yes, I





did know it. Moreover, I knew before we had been together a week that you were to love me more, and that nothing but your honor kept you from betraying it in words. I said you were the most loyal gentleman I have ever known, and now I am more than ever convinced. But — but, one must be sure before one — yet, I admit there have been times when I feared you would never say to me what you have said tonight — and I might never be sure by your own assertion that you cared so much for me. I cannot — cannot — say either yes or no. I — ”

She sprang to her feet nervously, and clasped her hands together.

“Go — go!” she said, almost with a sob. “Go before I say ‘No,’ and hurt you! Oh, give me time! Please, do not speak of this again until I give you permission. I will come to you myself, and tell you of my decision, when — when I am sure. Please, leave me now.”

For a full minute, the two faced each other in the light, reading each other’s eyes. His face had been gravely earnest, and now, as he looked, it became sympathetic. He knew that it was hard for her, with all her natural repression, to yield, and that the struggle through which she was passing was deeper than he might ever fully comprehend.

“Ah, Margaret,” he whispered, bending toward her, “I understand — I understand, little woman!”

And, smiling at her with eyes in which was a great and hungry affection, he lifted her hand to his lips, and turned away. He heard her gasp and drop upon

the bench. He paused to look back, and saw that she was leaning her head on her arms, which were thrown along the marble rest, as if her emotions had been beyond endurance. He stood irresolute for an instant, and then made another start, but a voice halted him. It was soft as the call of a spirit of the languorous night; soft as the mellow whistle of a bird to its mate in the acacias beside which he stood; faint almost as the whispering rustle of gently disturbed leaves. Yet, he heard. He walked back to meet her, with arms held out in another entreaty, to which she answered.

She came slowly, but, as he approached, he saw in the light of the ancient lamps that on her face was shy relinquishment.

“No — no!” she said, quickly, motioning aside his arms. “Let me have my own way! Let me be sure!”

She put two throbbing white hands up, and drew his sun-tanned face down close, tenderly studying its every line; and then, sighing in resignation and happiness, she permitted him to hold her gently in their first embrace.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

STILL abashed by love and with a new sense of possession, the English girl insisted that she and her companion should return to the house in the midst of the Garden of Fate. As they approached, they could see through the trees the lights of the huge fountain in front of the verandah, and paused behind the last screening clump of bushes for yet another caress. They strolled leisurely round the shimmering, changing light, beyond which they could see the Honorable Bob seated between Charlotte and the kaid. As they halted on the marble steps leading up to where the group was seated, the consul abruptly stopped talking. The newcomers seated themselves in silence, almost at his feet.

"Well, that's all," he said, awkwardly. "I've told you all the things that come up from the heart in a case like this, and I know that you'll understand, now that I've given my consent to this, that it's given for good and all. I'd have given it before, only that I've felt for some time that in the one thing which I wanted most I've failed. But I did my best, and may the Lord help us to make all our failures brave ones, because then we needn't be ashamed!"

The Honorable Bob tried to be jocular, and turned the conversation to a more happy vein.

"Lord!" he said. "You two don't know how tough

this is going to be on me. The only thing I ask is that, as soon as he can, Hamilton leaves this cursed country, and that you two get married. The reason for that is that Hamilton's liable to be made an earl 'most any day, and the boys out in Wyoming would never get over it if old Bob Marshall's daughter married into the nobility. Plain 'Mister,' or 'the Right Honorable,' don't sound so bad, but the other — well, the boys might shoot me up for that. You see, Hamilton, they never would understand that you can't help bein' an earl, and that it ain't your fault, nohow. I suppose we can't help it, but that part does seem a little tough. I'll have to tell them — What's broke loose?"

Rising high above the intervening walls of the palace, and disturbing the quietude of the night, a hoarse murmur, as of a mob invading the narrow street in front of the consulate, came to them in a strong crescendo. There were hoarse shouts as of men in angry dispute, and an outburst of groans, shrieks and wild imprecations, as if some conflict were imminent. The kaid had started running toward the gate of the garden, when it was burst open by one of the soldiers on guard. Dick, running close behind the Englishman, heard the man shout to him in Arabic:

"The captain, Sidi-Suleyman, is fighting out in front to protect some prisoners. Shall I let them in?"

The kaid, without answering, ran past the man, jerked the heavy bar of the outer gate open, and, throwing up a hand, demanded silence. The shouts died away as the mob in the street recognized him. Standing defiantly against the wall were two huge men

of the desert, supporting between them a limp figure, whose chin had dropped weakly forward on his breast. Sidi-Suleyman, with drawn saber, grinning fiercely and with clothes almost torn from him, stood in front of a little cordon of soldiers, ready to fight to the last.

"What does this mean, Sidi?" demanded the kaid.

"It means that I've got three prisoners, who surrendered on condition that they be turned over to you personally, and I've done it," the captain answered in fierce Arabic. "And, by the beard of the Prophet, I'd have brought them here, if I had to cut down every scurvy Moor in Fez to reach your excellency!"

"Take them inside!" the kaid ordered, and turned to the mob. "Disperse, ye men of Fez," he said. "I shall hold the prisoners safe." For an instant, the mob hesitated, and then began to murmur in assent. Voices arose, calling:

"Obey his excellency, the great kaid. He never breaks his word. Let us move on."

The kaid, seeing that all danger of disturbance was over, reëntered the courtyard, while the soldiers barred the big gates behind him. He saw that it was empty, and, suspecting that Sidi-Suleyman, anticipating a fight, had hurried his prisoners to the rear, he walked straight back to the garden. A figure was stretched out on the topmost step on a profusion of cushions hastily thrown there by the group round about. At the very bottom of the steps, with arms folded, stood one of the most fiercely majestic Berbers that the kaid had ever seen. The man turned fearlessly to look at him as he approached, and he saw that the mountaineer

was garbed as a shereef, a splendid specimen of the Berber tribe.

The prostrate figure in white was being supported on the knee and arm of a man whose dress proclaimed him to be a sheik, who seemed no less a warrior than the stalwart shereef. The kaid sprang up the steps, looked at the fallen man, and gave an almost imperceptible start of surprise. It was Buhammei!

The consul, leaning on the opposite side, was forcing brandy down the wounded leader's throat, and Dick, on one knee, was endeavoring to assist. Charlotte and Margaret were standing to one side, bending far over in suspense. Sidi-Suleyman stood at Buhammei's feet, motionless as the shereef.

"Ah, Kaid Clarke," Buhammei said weakly, in his musical English, "I did not expect to come to you thus. I had hoped to surrender to you a man whose life was worth while; but Allah, in his greatness, has cut my span."

He gave a groan of pain, and gasped; for Dick, anxious to prolong the man's life, had thrust his hands beneath the folds of the burnous, endeavoring to stanch the flow of blood from cruel wounds.

"Clarke," he said gently, "can't we do something for him? I'm afraid he's hurt pretty badly."

The fallen man turned his head toward the speaker, and faintly smiled.

"No," he said, answering for himself. "You can do nothing. Three times the mob, fighting Sidi-Suleyman, thrust me through. Please, let me talk while I may."

He accepted another drink of brandy, and, seeming strengthened by it, raised his head a little higher on the sheik's knee.

"Clarke," he said, "you and I have not been friends, nor could we ever be. But you are an honorable man. There is no use in pretense. For twenty years, the people of my mother have waited for me to take what was mine. You know it!"

He was interrupted by a fit of coughing, and doubled over with spasmodic pains. Dick was still holding the folds of the burnous over the wounds.

"You may regard the *Jehad* as right or wrong, but it does not matter now. To me, it was right. It was my only inheritance. I fought it as best I could. You defeated me, but you will admit after I am gone that no civilization of yours could have fought a more honorable fight. I am that unfortunate thing in which conflict a mixture of heritage from free-born kings, a religion different from yours, and a training among civilized people of your own kind. My only memory of a mother is that of a bright-clad figure rolling in agony down these steps. I am the prince who played at the fountain!"

He lifted a hand strengthened by passion, and gestured to his side and out to the glowing mass of color, through which blue and golden drops of water, like a stream of gorgeous jewels, were dropping into the basin below.

"I am he who was carried over the wall, and the Berber woman who saved me died years afterward in my arms, weak in body, but not in will, imposing upon me

the pledge that I should return from your cold and heartless Europe to take my place upon the throne of my people."

He twisted his body, seeking an instant's respite from the pain that was tearing at him as a wolf tears at its victim. Charlotte handed another cushion to Dick, who pushed it under Buhammei.

"Thanks," he said, "that is better." Then, as if eager to waste none of his scant time, he went on:

"No one knows what sacrifice the poverty-stricken tribes of my people made to support and assist me — their last great hope. I have been accused of many things that are not true. I never gambled a franc in all my life. I dwelt obscurely in the *Quartier Latin* of Paris, that I might husband the money sent me, and with it buy arms. No man studied more faithfully than I in your universities, and none more devoutly prayed to Allah that I might be fitted for my task. I have sacrificed neither faith nor honor to gain my end. I was not even responsible for the death of that fanatic who, maddened in his hope for the faith, attempted to kill Captain Whitney on Mount Zalag. It was a full month before I knew of the occurrence. My only act of violence for which I am ashamed was in striking a faithful man, the one who holds me — dying — who, unfortunately, recognized me all too soon. And, dying, I say that I can find no mistake of mine, unless it was the mistake of love — and in love there can be no mistake."

Those round him stirred restlessly, and the kaid,

looking up, saw that Charlotte's eyes were filled with tears.

"And you, Mr. Marshall — I want you to know that for no great length of time did I bear malice. You followed your belief, even as I have always followed mine. Life is not long enough to harbor personal enmities."

He was seized with another violent fit of coughing, which left him almost unconscious of his surroundings, and again they stimulated the fitfully glowing spark of life. The *kaid* shook his head at this, signifying that he thought the end had come. But the dying Moor rallied once more, and, in a voice so faint that it sounded as if coming from the vast outer spaces, addressed the *kaid*:

"Why cannot you forgive?" he asked. "Why do you drive your soldiers on into the very hearts of our mountains relentlessly to slaughter those who fought only for what they thought was right? I came to you to surrender myself, hoping by my poor death to purchase peace. The Berber is conquered. The *Jihad* is done! Then, why lay waste the fields of men who fought you bravely? Is it a part of the Christian creed to kill, and kill, and kill, when the cause no longer exists? Must you demand blood from dying men, when the throne that you have reared is occupied without opposition? I came to beg you, in the name of Allah — in the name of that God to whom you bow your head — to desist. You have put a prince upon the throne. Can he do better to win the hearts of those who were not with him than to declare amnesty? Call



back your men. Let shereef and sheik carry back the news that the mighty English kaid is not so merciless as he seems."

The Moor's voice had become so faint that it had died away into a hoarse whisper. The kaid suddenly bent far over, and spoke loudly, as if hoping that his words would penetrate to the dying brain.

"Buhammei," he said, "I give you my word. There shall be amnesty! I promise it!"

Buhammei smiled gratefully, and then they saw that his eyes were roving round the group. Dick,

turning his head over his shoulder, motioned toward Charlotte. In pitying tears, she dropped to her knees beside Buhammei, and took his hand in hers. With a last desperate effort, the Moor found strength to raise it reverently to his lips, and then drooped listlessly, as if weary of ambition, pain and life. The kaid, suddenly reaching over to lift the dying man up, caught a tragic, gasping whisper:

“The *Jehad* is done!”

With more respect than he had ever shown Buhammei alive, the kaid gently lowered the dead leader down upon the cushion. The stately shereef and sheik dropped upon their knees, with faces to the place of rising sun, and so muttered prayers. An added majesty had come to the quiet face of Buhammei, as if death had still further ennobled his features.

The sand-diviner's prophecy of so many years before had come true, and the final chapter was written in the tragic history of that tragic spot — The Garden of Fate. And it seemed to those who looked down upon the still form, dead on the spot where his mother had so cruelly died, in the very entrance to the palace builded for her by the stately prince of long ago, that they heard, for an instant, above the splash of waters, the sound of swirling, silken garments, the joyous shouts of boyish laughter, and the faint strumming of a lute, accompanying a sad and tender mother-song.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THE full moon had come again. On the terraced roof of the consulate, regardless of the Moslem rule which declares that the roofs "belong to the women," the Honorable Bob was taking his last look over the city of Fez. Stretching away from him on every side was a sea of flat-topped terraces, towers white and austere, the gray roofs of ancient forts, and all relieved here and there by the green pointed minarets, lifted appealingly upward to the stars. Up in the heart of the city stood the ruins of the ancient fortress, and beyond all, seeming almost a part of the brooding sky, towered Mount Zalag, the silent witness of the rise, growth and state of the ancient capital. The murmuring sounds of harems, the soft twanging of stringed instruments, the crooning lullabies of song, and once the sound of a flute, mellow and melancholy, were wafted across from other terraces.

The consul looked over into the dark depths of the street below, and thought of that time, but a few weeks before, when the thoroughfare had been filled with silent white-clad men, fierce Berbers all, who, under the proclamation of amnesty, had invaded the city to pay fealty to the boy Sultan, and to claim their dead. He remembered the turbid silence of their departure, as they carried Buhammei in state from the doors of the

consulate and on out through the wide-swung city gates, on their march to the desert.

The desert had claimed its own, and had given the dead leader rest. The desert had given him title to a throne, and then, when fate wrested it from him, had taken him back to its bosom. The hope of the Berber was gone!

That the fierce tribesmen, who had silently entered the consulate and partaken of his salt, had sworn friendship to him and his, mattered little to the Honorable Bob. For some reason inexplicable, he was filled with a sense of regret that this was to be his last night in the intensely foreign city, which he had invaded in so careless a way. With a lingering look over the splendid moonlit panorama, he turned to the stairway leading downward.

In the middle of the courtyard was a miniature pyramid of casks and bales, wrapped in waterproof and securely lashed in readiness for the panniers. In the half-bare *salon* on the side sounded shouts of laughter from his household, which was not participating in his melancholy mood. The kaid, with new volubility, was telling in terse sentences of the ceremony attendant upon his resignation.

"The good old Sidi was bound to outdo himself. Two-and-twenty times he fired the guns, although four is all a Sultan gets. Quite possible, it seems to me, that he wished to show the troops just what a new minister of war could do. Everything was very stately. The only regret they had was that the Right Honorable Kaid Whitney could not be there to hear the

noise. If I had permitted, they would have sent the full garrison of Fez to accompany us to the coast. 'A company, Sidi, will do.' 'What, nothing but a company?' said his excellency, Sidi-Suleyman. 'Why not a division?' 'Because,' said I, laughing in his face, 'you know and I know, Sidi, that, with a certain forty men that I can pick, I can cut my way round the world!' 'Quite true,' said he, 'provided they were led by one of two men.' 'Who is the other?' I asked. 'The American who fights the guns,' he answered, 'and who, I am certain, has seen the light, and will some day come back to be among those of his faith; the unbeliever, who shouted with us *Biswallah Allah wahid!*' And, Dick, if you ever do come back to this country after you've carried off that sister of mine, heaven help you if you forget your Moslem faith."

The kaid leaned back and laughed, while the consul slipped quietly in, seating himself on a wicker chair marked for abandonment.

"Well," the kaid continued, "everything was dignified enough, until the boy Sultan came riding out on the big white horse, for which he had taken a violent fancy. The sword-bearer pranced gayly ahead, the umbrella teetered gayly round, and the slaves kept slashing away at imaginary insects. His majesty is not permitted by court etiquette to give any recognition to salutes — or anything else for that matter. But, at the last minute, he dropped out of his saddle, ran across to where I was standing, leaped up, and threw his arms round my neck, and gave me as sturdy a hug as could any boy in all of England. To tell the

truth, it touched my heart. By Jove! I held the nipper in my arms, suddenly remembering that I had known him since he was a baby, and time and again had carried him through the streets of Fez on the pommel of my saddle, asking myself whether or not he would ever own a throne. It almost upset me. I felt as blubbery as he did — don't you know? — and before ever I thought, I promised him that, if ever he needed me, I would come."

"Well, you'd do it, wouldn't you?" the Honorable Bob burst out. "You wouldn't leave that poor little cuss to fight his battle alone, if it ever came to a showdown?"

"Certainly not," Clarke answered. And then, with a return of his care-free humor, he added: "I could not do that — could I? — after gaining the assurance of him and all his ministers that everything which the retiring American consul had asked would be carried out to the letter."

The Honorable Bob settled back into his chair, with a stentorian sigh of content.

"I have made good, haven't I?" he said. "I've got everything I asked for. In fact, I've got more than I wanted, both here and at home. Now, I never had any idea that I should ever go to the United States senate, but Washington does look a heap better than Fez to me, and, more than that, it'll be a nice resting place for all of you, to come to and stay with me until my term is done."

He turned in his seat to face Dick, and said, insistently:

"Dick, you don't want to forget that you've given me your word that, when I leave the senate, you're to quit the army, and that all of us, Charlie and Hamilton and Margaret and you, are to live together. I want you by me, because no one can tell what's goin' to happen. Why, I'm not bettin' that I may not be an English earl myself some day. The only thing I failed at, and I'll tell you this now that we're goin' to leave the country tomorrow, is that — well, I've come to one conclusion, I'm a hell of a Cupid."

They made one last inspection, before bidding good-bye to the palace. The dawn would find them on their way to the coast, and this was their last opportunity. In a silence bordering on awe, they passed back through the outer court and into the Garden of Fate. Slowly, they walked along the graveled paths, until they stood beside the great fountain in front of the tiny house. It was not flowing. Everything was silent and still. None of them ventured to step upon the broad marble way, which had known so much tragedy. No one spoke. Each seemed to feel that any word in this spot would be an act of desecration. They were bidding good-bye to the place where had palpitated extremes of love and of hate, in which, for a moment, they had taken part. The white walk bordering it had looked unfeelingly on kingdoms changed, ideals shattered and hopes abandoned; on laughter and tears and on new loves springing from bud to bloom. This garden had changed the lives of all who had ever entered it, from that of the Berber maid to those others of the vast outer world, who had heedlessly wandered into its gor-

geous thrall. It had witnessed the downfall of two heirs to a throne, the death of the innocent, and a compact of peace. Men and thrones had passed away, and dynasties had changed, but it was still breathing with life — every shrub and flower attesting its perpetuity.

Silently, as they had entered, they passed from it. With his own hands, the Honorable Bob pulled the huge stone gate shut. The rusty greaves of the lock whined in protest. He carried the key, as an evil thing, to the well in the outer garden, and dropped it into the black depths. There was a splash of riven water, and it was lost. The Garden of Fate was sealed, as it had been sealed those many years before, when a sorrowful Sultan pressed his signet to the heated wax. Superstition would furnish those to come a better lock. The tangled weeds and shrubbery might again run across its length, the tapestries rot and molder on its walls. For these, at least, who turned their backs and went away, it was forever closed.

THE END

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